

FEEL THE BUZZ!!



The week that was

Dan Morari took the mound Saturday night determined to put an end to a losing streak the Yellow Jackets could ill afford. Frustrated by a tough 3-2 loss two nights before the Yellow Jackets needed something special as they battle to stay in playoff contention. Instead Morari delivered something spectacular. His four hit 10k complete game shutout was a thing of beauty. Don't be fooled by the final score (8-0). Morari delivered under pressure all night — this was a 1-0 game with two out in the bottom of the 8th. The final out of the game was, ironically, the hardest hit ball of the night for the Weyburn Beavers. An attempt to turn a double into a triple was met by a perfect relay throw from Joel Cardinal to Zach Wentz. Game over.



“He’s like our Halladay” a YJs insider remarked. Since this friend is a die-hard Jays fan not prone to hyperbole I asked for an explanation. Morari’s numbers would, surely, make Doc proud but he explained that he wasn’t making a sloppy baseball comparison — he was talking about leadership. On the field Morari was shrugging his way through some post-game congratulations. He managed to look every well-wisher square in the eye and speak easily while simultaneously looking uncomfortable with the attention. He was right. I’m not privy to what goes on in locker rooms or buses but I don’t imagine Morari is giving much in the way of speeches. My guess is his leadership emanates from the way he goes about his business, the kind of guy who just doesn’t get talked about enough. In the bigs they get thrown in the spotlight when a lame-duck GM is so desperate to get some face time in large American markets that he throws his loyal and intensely private ace under the bus right before the all star game. Not to put too fine a point on it, Toronto may well have to trade Halladay but if the Blue Jays let said immature self-absorbed jackass trade the best player in the history of the organization, I’m done with them...you should be too. I’m absolutely sure Paul Beeston won’t let this happen.

Speaking of Jays...based on the head gear around Cairns field, a shout out to Aaron Hill and Roy Halladay starting tonight seems appropriate. Hill’s only starting because of reigning MVP Dustin Pedroia’s absence but a healthy Hill is just plain better in every phase of the game. If you offered him straight up for Pedroia, I think the BoSox make that trade in .00001 seconds...Jays fans everywhere should be crossing their fingers that Theo Epstein isn’t smart enough to propose that trade while Ricchardi still has a job.

Morari’s dominant performance gave the Jackets some momentum going into Sunday’s double header but the boys were strangely subdued in the early going of game #1. Bevan Ledingham gave up 3 runs in the top of the 1st while struggling with control. He battled hard despite not having his best stuff and, thanks in part to Andrew Buckham who came in and got him out of a tough spot in the 5th, didn’t give up another run. When pitcher-turned-DH Logan Clewes stepped up to the plate with two men on, the score was still 3-0 and the Jackets needed a spark. He absolutely crushed a Josh Miller delivery on a line over the left field fence. The double he hit in the late stages of the game might have even been hit harder. It never got more than 15 feet off of the ground and it hit the bottom of the left field wall on the fly. Clewes performance wasn’t enough as the Jackets went on to sustain a 5-4 loss. Still...shouldn’t GM Dave Riggs be doing something to get the WMBL to adopt National League rules?

Up in the broadcast booth Devin Heroux, the voice of the Yellow Jackets, pointed out that the YJs had 9 one run losses going into this game. No wonder it was a tough one to swallow for the Jackets who, to a man, felt a little snake bitten. Ten one run losses in less than 30 games will produce some strain.

Speaking of Heroux—if you can’t make it out to the park tune in to the podcast. I don’t know where or when but this kid is definitely going to ply his trade in the big leagues one day.

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Those who would dismiss the positive predictions and optimism that sneak their way into the Buzz from time to time as the rantings of a partisan, might want to take note. This team — which made a gaggle of errors early in the season — now list defense as a strength. They're rock solid up the middle — the Klassen/Cardinal dp combination is the best in the league; John Jones is a prototypical speedy centre fielder who is getting a great jump on everything and Matt Luchessi is the best defensive catcher in the league. The corners of the infield and outfield are providing power and RBIs. And nobody — and I mean nobody — wants to face this pitching staff in a three game series.

In game two Brian Loard came up in the 1st inning with the bases jacked and delivered a long fly to give the Yellow Jackets a 4-0 lead they would never relinquish. Nate Coronado looked awfully sharp delivering the Jacket's second complete game victory of the weekend. He of the silky-smooth delivery relied heavily on a big overhand curveball that he threw early in the count for strikes all game long. When Coronado has that pitch working, it adds 5 to 10 mph on to his fastball and makes him practically unhittable. He rode this combination to a complete game victory giving up a single earned run in 7 innings.

So the Jackets continued their win one—lose one pattern. It won't be enough to make the playoffs . . . but these boys are convinced that they're on their way to bigger and better things. Speaking of bigger and better things....



The week that will be...A Yellow Jacket gets his shot in the bigs...

The dog-days of the season are over. The Yellow Jackets are officially in the final sprint towards the playoffs and there's only one home game this week against the rival Regina Red Sox. I'm not going to list all the reasons you need to get out to the park for this one . . . just do yourself a favour and do it.

If you do need a reason, how about catcher Matt Luchessi? 'The week that will be' that I want to talk about this week begins in September when Luchessi takes to the field in New Jersey for an invite-only try-out for the Philadelphia Phillies. The Buzz got his reaction firsthand.

Who was your first phone call?

"My Dad."

And?

Lucchesi is unable to stifle a big grin.

"Yeah...he was pretty excited."

I'm sure it will be a bit of a nervous time and I'm sure you'll get a lot of advice...what are you planning to do at the tryout?

I'm just going to go out there and have fun. No matter what happens it'll be a great experience. If I'm having fun it doesn't matter.

When asked what he thinks they like about him Lucchesi says it's his defense and outstanding arm strength that has set him apart:

"I think I can scrap my way into any lineup."

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No one who's watched Luchessi catch every inning of every game for the Yellow Jackets would doubt that. If there was any worry that Luchessi's good fortune might prove a distraction, it was stamped out in the first game of the double header. Feeling like he had a bad at-bat late in yesterday's loss, Luchessi was absolutely despondant between games. His desire to win and his efforts behind the plate will serve the Jackets well down the final stretch of the season, and anybody who knows "Looch" will be rooting for this kid who plays the game right come September.

Player of the week...Offense — Brian Loard

I'm breaking down the player(s) of the week into offense and defense this week...because...well....just because.

I've said it here before, Loard — "Bubba" to teammates and fans alike —is a "quality at bat" machine. In the first game of yesterday's double header, Loard, hitting out of the lead-off spot, did what all great lead-off hitters do. He got on base, walking three times.

In the second game of the double header Dave Riggs and Regan Kjargaard moved Loard into the 6 hole in the line up. It didn't take him long to adjust to what all good middle of the order sluggers do: delivering with men on base. In the bottom of the first Loard strode to the plate with the basis loaded and hit an absolute bomb. The grand slam was the defining moment in the key victory in the second half of Sunday's double bill.

Loard leads the team with 16 RBIs — the best part of this number is that 10 of his RBIs have come with 2 outs. Clutch. Loard also leads the team with 3 dingers and his disciplined approach has led to 19 walks and a solid .404 OBP. Bubba can flat-out hit.

Player of the week...Defense — Joel Cardinal/Scott Klassen

Klassen is leading the league in hitting and Cardinal has been fantastic at the dish but right now watching these two guys turn double plays is worth the price of admission alone. I mentioned it earlier but strength up the middle is the hallmark of every good team. These guys are strong.



Pitcher of the week...Logan Clewes/Dan Morari

I've done this before...as for Dan Morari — see above. I'm naming Clewes for his offense — again see above.

Honourable Mention: Nate Coronado the silky smooth lefty is really coming into his own as the season progresses.

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Player Profiles...

John Jones

Position: OF

#5

Yavapai College

Home Town: Phoenix, Arizona

When John Jones argues a call, he's the kind of kid that you tend to believe. Quiet and unassuming off the field, this 5 tool player isn't quick to boil over. That said, there is a quiet determination about him that defines everything he does on the baseball field. I hear he was a stand-out linebacker who chose to pursue baseball full time in college.



I never saw him play but I guarantee you that he never ever slipped by a full back on his way into the backfield. He did what you're supposed to do — he manned up and took on a blocker in the correct gap and then went and got the damn ball.

B.T.W. in a response to a spelling request my beloved informs me that Yavapai College is "a great baseball college." When I ask how she could possibly be privy to such information, she tells me that she saw it on "The Real Housewives of Orange County." Apparently one of the rather loathsome offspring on one of these rather loathsome reality characters went for an interview there... I have no point here.

Favourite thing about playing baseball?

Going out playing the game everyday...hanging with the guys just everything.

What does a kid from Phoenix think of Saskatoon?

It's a small town and yet it has got all the attributes of a big town. At the same time it's not too big you can get around town without a problem. As a team and as individuals we have a great time in this city.

Favourite major leaguer?

Albert Puhols

Why?

He's the greatest hitter of all time.

Really? Interesting—you don't think it's Manny Ramirez?

(Jones is far too polite and clearly has to resist the urge to issue a "what are you an idiot?" comment)

Um....he's second I guess.

Ok...John, any advice/tips for a Junior Jacket who wants to play in the Outfield in College and for the YJs one day?

Just play every day like it's your last. Don't ever take one day for granted. God forbid something could happen or, one day, they're going to tell you you can't play anymore so just don't ever take anything for granted.



Walk-up song?

It was Magic Stick but they had to cancel that one because of...um...explicit language.

What is it now?

All Along the Watchtower by Jimi Hendrix.

A good buddy of mine used it and I thought it sounded pretty cool.

Come out and see the John along with the rest of the Yellow Jackets as they take on Regina at Cairns field on Thursday, July 16th at 7:05pm, BBQ opens at 6:00pm.

If you have and ideas, suggestions or topics you'd like to see in up-coming editions of the buzz drop us a line at cmsincer@yahoo.ca or michael@in-play.ca

