

FEEL THE BUZZ!!

Monday June 15, 2009

The week that was

“If you’re going through hell, keep going.”
— Winston Churchill



It’s only the second installment of this weekly discussion but, for Yellow Jackets fans, the theme seems all too familiar. The third week of the season was, a frustrating one for YJ nation. The source of the frustration is the mixture of losing and the undeniable feeling —reinforced in tantalizing glimpses — that this team is just too talented and resilient to stay down. The last edition of the Buzz followed Saturday’s 3-2 YJ’s victory. Unfortunately, any momentum they gained was undone by a Sunday rainout which meant the Jackets didn’t play again until Thursday’s gut-wrenching 8-7 loss to the Millers in Moose Jaw.

The tumultuous week continued Friday with another incredible outing from Jordan Rawlyk who pitched 9 innings giving up a single earned run. How good has Rawlyk been? He gave up a single earned run in 9 innings in his third start of the season and his ERA went up! Its now at 0.89. The Jackets prevailed in dramatic fashion with a 3-2 10-inning victory over Medicine Hat.

The Jackets have struggled with the lumber all season but sometimes you have to give credit where credit is due and the Melville Millionaires’ Kevin Crum earned his with a dominating pitching performance Saturday night. Crum spun a three hit complete game shut-out to earn the victory. The YJ’s Dan Morari matched him, giving up a single earned run and striking out 10 in 7 innings, eventually being tagged with the loss

That brings us to Sunday and our next Churchill quote (for reasons I don’t entirely fathom, people seem to find comfort in Churchill during tough stretches).

“I am an optimist. It does not seem too much use being anything else.”
— Winston Churchill

Last week’s promise came in the form of Saturday’s gutsy 3-2 victory. This week, even the most frustrated members of YJ nation could take heart in Sunday’s 9-8 loss. At a time when the voices of discord and distraction were at their peak, having just replaced their manager and going down 9-2 early at home, the Jackets did not quit. The spirited comeback fell short but the seeds of a turnaround could be contained in their abject refusal to give up.

I’m not here to fool you . . . this team needs to get off the mat and start playing winning baseball immediately to put themselves in position for a playoff run. Since I’d prefer not to be forced to reference this year’s New York Yankees in any positive manner, it’s nice to know there are models of toughness and resiliency in the Jackets’ own dressing room. Down 9-2 in the fourth inning on Sunday ,Dylan Okrane was having a terrible weekend. The night before, he lost a laser from catcher Matt Luchessi in the setting sun. Blinded, Okrane took the throw out at second base right in the kisser. On Sunday, things weren’t getting any better. He had already booted two balls when he stepped to the plate with two men on in the 5th. Given the already huge deficit, he had every excuse for giving into the negative voices that surely swirled in his head. Instead he shut them up, mashing a 2 run double to help key the comeback. The next inning, with men on 2nd and 3rd and two out, he made an absolutely spectacular run-saving, diving grab to retire the side and preserve the momentum that eventually got the Jackets to within a single run. YJ’s locker room would do well to follow Okrane’s example as they try to claw back into contention.

“Although prepared for martyrdom, I preferred that it be postponed.”
— Winston Churchill —

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The Buzz wishes to take this time to wish Marty Berson on the best in his future endeavors. It just didn't work out this time but Berson is a wonderful person and a baseball man through and through. He'll certainly land on his feet somewhere close to a dugout.

"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen"

There has been, naturally, a good deal of talk about coaching this week in and around the Yellow Jackets organization. If the YJ's are going to turn it around, it will be, of course, up to the players but it got me thinking about a guy who they'll be leaning heavily on the rest of the season. Coach Regan Kjargaard is a calm and (unless he's defending one of his players) pre-naturally quiet presence in and around the dug-out, but his passion for the game and for his players is obvious. He imparts knowledge with an unyielding positivity and models his movements around the diamond on an old and enduring code that leaves room for creativity and laughter but demands things are done the right way. You stand up for each other and you respect the game. With a losing record and a coaching change, there are a lot of voices competing to be heard — the players will be well served listening to the one that refuses to shout.

The week that will be...

"Difficulties mastered are opportunities won."
— Winston Churchill

The Yellow Jackets will surely be looking to come out of this week's busy 5 game segment with a winning record. The week begins at Cairns field on Tuesday June 16th and Wednesday June 17th as the Lethbridge Bulls come to 'Toon town for a critical 2 game set. Both games are 7:05 start times — Yellow Jackets nation should be out in full force as the Jackets then hit the road for a Thursday night tilt against the Swift Current Indians before moving on to Edmonton and a two game series with the Prospects Friday and Saturday night.



"I am easily satisfied with the very best."
— W.C.

Player of the week...John Jones

Much has been said about the Jackets slow start at the dish but moving John Jones to the lead-off spot on Sunday seems to be an inspired move. A quiet kid from Phoenix, Arizona, Jones' has all the attributes you look for in a ball player. His batting average isn't yet where you'd like to see it for a lead-off man but he has a serious knack for getting on base —accumulating 6 walks in the early season and isn't afraid to sacrifice his body to raise his on-base percentage as evidenced by his 3 hbp's. He is leading or tied for team lead in doubles, triples and runs and sits second in runs scored, total bases and RBIs. He has the speed you like to see in a lead off man and, perhaps most importantly, he's been playing some outstanding defense.

Honourable mention — Scott Klassen was hitting the ball hard before being temporarily sidelined with a quad strain.

Pitcher of the week...Logan Clewes

This is going to be a tough call each and every week with this classy pitching staff. I'm doing my honourable mentions first: Jordan Rawlyk tossed a masterful nine innings in Friday night's win, Dan Morari came close to matching that performance in his start Saturday night and Nate Coronado recovered from a sore arm to provide shut out innings in clutch situations in both Saturday and Sunday's games.

So what does a guy have to do to be pitcher of the week? How about jogging in from the bullpen and ripping an RBI double to key a 4 run rally while wearing "slippers"? Logan Clewes was relaxing in the bullpen preparing for his upcoming Tuesday night start during Sunday afternoon's tilt with the Millionaires. He was a little surprised when, in the bottom of the fifth after Chris Dabler came up lame with what appeared to be a leg injury , he was called to the batter's box. So surprised he was still wearing his turf shoes ('slippers' in dugout terminology). He smiled, stepped into the box and with men on 1st and 2nd, calmly stroked a double, driving in Thomas Robulack, the key hit in a 4 run rally. That's the kind of performance that'll earn a guy pitcher of the week honours.



Player Profiles...



The Klassen Brothers: Scott and Trevor

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”
— You know who

This week we'll get two for the price of one and speak with two of Saskatoon's favourite sons Scott and Trevor Klassen. These two brothers bring enthusiasm, easy smiles and an intense love of the game to the ballpark every day. Whatever sibling rivalries they had growing up have clearly been softened with age. After years spent playing for different teams all over North America, the brothers have come home to Saskatoon to play together on the same squad for the first time.

Scott Klassen

Position: Second Base (Younger Brother)

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Played two years at Wilson State College in North Dakota before Missouri Southern State University

Trevor Klassen

Position: RHP (Older Brother)

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Played in North Dakota at Minot State University before transferring to Alcorn state and eventually signing with the Texas Heat of the Continental League.

That's a lot of stops. Favourite place to play in the U.S.?

Trevor: California. It just fits my style and I love the diversity of the people.

Favourite thing about playing for the YJs?

Trevor: First thing is I get to play with my bro. We're three years apart so we never got to play together.

Favourite thing about playing baseball?

Scott: Just love being out there with the guys, the team atmosphere. Just going out there and going at it and being competitive.

Trevor: Just being out there and being competitive.

Favourite major leaguer?

Scott: Ryan Howard. I love his swing, great hitter. I love Josh Hamilton, he's an inspirational guy.

Trevor: Roger Clemens

Why? He's a horse and he has battled adversity. He is, arguably, one of the best of all time.



Scott, any advice/tips for an up-and-coming Junior Jacket who wants to play second base for the YJs one day?
Just keep working hard. It's going to come eventually as you move on to the next levels. You'll learn all kind of stuff. For Canadians especially, the chance to play at a collegiate level is going to be tough because we play only 4 months a year. So work hard. As a hitter being able to make adjustments is one of the key things to hitting. If you're struggling make an adjustment, take hacks in the cage.

Scott, any advice/tips for an up-and-coming Junior Jacket who wants to pitch for the YJs one day?
Just have fun and enjoy the game. You know you're going to deal with a lot of ups and downs. Probably more downs than ups. You gotta stick in there with it.

Walk-up song?

Scott: Breaking Benjamin: Breathe

Why?

It just pumps me up.

Trevor: Panama: Van Halen

Why?

I'm not even an "oldies rock" guy but every time I hear it gets me pumped up.

While we're here have you ever faced Scott in a game?

Trevor: Never. I don't think I've every faced him.

Who would win that battle?

Trevor: I'm the older brother man. Roll-over. Change-up away and he'll be out in front.

Ed. Note: Trevor had already left the room...but we'll give the older brother have the last word.

Come out and see the Klassen brothers along with the rest of the Yellow Jackets as they're at home, at Cairns field, for a critical two game home-stand Tuesday and Wednesday June 17th and 18th at 7:05pm.

If you have any questions, 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

