



# Vagrant League

## Fantasy Baseball



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## The Agony And The Ecstasy

*One Owner's Take as the Race Comes Down to the Wire*

**Barry Greenberg**

Worried Owner

It is now late September 2004. There is about one week left in the Roto season as I write this article. As far as I can recall, this has been the most competitive finish in memory, with first through fourth all up for grabs. And right now, at the top of the heap since the second week of the season and eagerly anticipating its first championship, sits my franchise, the Barbarryans.

So why am I not having any fun? You would think that someone holding a lead this late in the season should be elated, if not a little nervous. The problem is that my once seemingly insurmountable lead of 20 points or greater, which I had held for about three months, has almost completely disintegrated in the last month or so, and I am left counting the days until the season ends, just hoping to hold on.

Both Eight Men Out and the KrackerJacks vastly improved their teams around the trading deadline. With

*Continued on page 2 – The Agony*

## Left Hanging By Chad

*Oops, I Did it Again*

**Doug Drotman**

Dis-Spirited Owner

This was going to be the year. I had one of the best teams going into the draft. Halfway through the draft I had done exactly what I had hoped. Everything was heading in the right direction – I was smiling and laughing like Roger Clemens and Dave Henderson in 1986 in the Red Sox dugout at Shea and then, just like Al Gore (and America) I was done in by a hanging Chad. And ever since that day – everything went wrong.

The Chad that dashed my hopes is Chad Cordero. He was on my list of secondary closers alongside Valverde. I had already gotten Valverde at the bargain price of \$7 and to my amazement Cordero was still there very late in the draft. The problem, I had \$4 left and two pitching spots to go. I also needed a started and Wilson Alvarez was still there.

I convened the experts in my brain (Jeff Wilpon, Jim Duquette, Fred Wilpon & Steve Phillips) – and I made the decision, don't bid up Cordero -- you do not have enough to get him – try and get Alvarez for \$3 and hope that you could wait everyone out until everyone has \$1 and then steal Cordero for \$1. I got Alvarez and was back-slapping just like the Mets when they got Mo Vaughn.

And then it happened, a few picks later Barry throws out Cordero and the room is as silent as it was that famous day when I called out Curt Leskanic for \$15. I squirmed, I gulped I begged for someone to bid. It remained as quiet as a September game at Shea. Barry stole Cordero, the draft and the league!

From that day on, nearly every decision I made this year – other than Buck and Linebrink -- was wrong. Trade Nevin for Beckett; trade for Odalis Perez; Trade for Pettite; stick with Redding; pick up Estes (twice); pick-up McCracken, Church, Hancock. It was over – I had my chance and let it pass.

And, although I have only myself to blame, just like Al Gore, I'll always blame That Hangin' Chad.



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 [The Agony & the Ecstasy](#) | [Left Hanging by Chad](#)
- 2 [The Chase for the Title](#)
- 3 [BarBarryans at the Gate](#) | [Thoughts on September 23rd](#)
- 5 [Some Records Were Meant to be Broken](#)
- 5 [When Predictions Meet Reality](#)
- 6 [5 Year Analysis](#) | [Thanks](#)
- 7 [Miscellaneous Information](#) | [Average Position Finish](#)

## The Agony

*Continued from Page 1*

a 20+ point lead as well as significant leads in many categories, I felt no need to match their moves and figured that I would still win with room to spare, although maybe by not such a large margin. As August wore on, however, the good fortune that had allowed me to build such an imposing lead deserted me, injuries began to mount (Piazza and Burrell to DL), and general ineffectiveness pervaded my team until that time stellar pitching staff.

The combination of the superior competition paired with the anemic numbers being posted by my now mediocre team resulted in the inevitable; my lead began to dissipate, at first slowly and then in a hurry. When I first noticed the trend, I had commented to some other team owners that the finish would be very close and my victory, while still probable, was now far from assured. They advised there was nothing to fret about and I was just a first time winner-to-be nervously, but needlessly, worrying.

The problem was that although my overall lead was still large, my category leads had drastically eroded. Having tracked this alarming trend since mid-August, I was concerned that if and when the collapse came, it would be fast and furious. Unfortunately for me, and great for the KrackerJacks and Eight Men Out, my predictions were accurate.

As late as August 23rd, my lead remained at 19.5 points. Within two weeks, however, that lead would be more than halved. During the following week, the lead dwindled even further and at one point, real time stats reported my lead had actually shrunk to a measly 2 1/2 points over Eight Men Out!

Since that time, the lead has stabilized in the mid to high single digits. The KrackerJacks have briefly surpassed Eight Men Out into second place, and it would appear that either of these two teams now needs an unlikely confluence of events to catch me. Nevertheless, nothing is certain but a close finish and much anxiety to be endured by all involved over the next week or so.

Had I been told at the beginning of the year that I would do no worse than third place, and would hold the lead until at least almost the very end with a great chance of winning, I would have been elated. However, having seen a huge lead evaporate has turned what I had hoped

to be a victory lap into a nail biter. What was once a blowout is now a barnburner indeed!! This may be great for the league, but not much fun for the Bar Barryans.

Thus the question is: it better to be the pursued in 1st but now risking a monumental choke job, or the pursuer that may be exceeding expectations? I say that ultimately what matters, and what will be remembered, is who ends up as the winner, so I will know my answer only when the season ends.



## The Chase For The Title

*Will a New Strategy Pay Off?*

**Lee Sunshine**

Hopeful Winner

This year should teach me something for future drafts. Things never turn out like you think or like you plan. As everybody knows, I went into this years draft with a new strategy. Spend money on pitching. Strong pitching in latter part of the season may help catapult me higher in the standings. In years past, I spent much less on pitching, and relied on my ability to recognize talent and bargains. Although, I think I did a pretty good job of doing that, I noticed my pitching would always break down in the second half of the season. This year, I was going to see that it doesn't happen.

So I spent money on pitching. Midway through the year, I settled on the idea, that there was no way to catch Barry for first place (25 pts behind), and my improved pitching would be able to get me 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> place. As we rolled into September, and I cut Barry's lead to single digits, with Frank and Ed staying close as well, I started to think that maybe there was a chance of catching Barry after all. At that point, my pitching fell apart. I dropped from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3rd in ERA, and had Frank percentage points behind me, putting a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish in jeopardy. Padilla and Lawrence were breaking down. Jaret Wright was tired. Even, the usually reliable Smoltz gave up 5 ER in 1/3 Inn. in the final week. And, still I finished only 3 pts behind Barry, with a feeling if only the season was a couple of days longer, I could have caught him. And the reason-HITTING.



## **Barbarryans at the Gate**

*Victory at Last*

### **Barry Greenberg**

Winner

Victory, at last. After many years of dismal seasons and some recent near misses, I can finally say that I am the Vagrant League Champion. And it is a great feeling, too. This was probably the most exciting finish in league history, with the top four places not decided until the last week. In fact, Eight Men Out even had an outside chance to win on the last day. This was a surprise considering the Barbarryans had a huge lead for most of the season. On June 27, the lead was a seemingly insurmountable 31.5 points over the then second place KrackerJacks, but things tightened up after that to an incredible finish. (See related article this issue, The Agony and the Ecstasy).

Congratulations to all of this years other money winners. The late season charges by both Eight Men Out and the KrackerJacks proves once again the wisdom of not waiting for next season, giving it your all, and that no lead is safe. The Futurians showed by their second money finish in three years that they don't suck. And of course the Master Blasters finished in the money for the fourth consecutive season.

If asked to name the reasons why my team won, I will start with one word. Luck. Lets face it; most of what happens in this league is beyond our control. For the most part, the way to succeed here is simple; draft the best team by acquiring value players and make good trades afterwards. Easier said than done though. This is a veteran league where we may disagree on some player's values, but generally we as a group know what we are doing. So you must pick your team and then cross your fingers.

Just consider the things that are out of your control. Start with injuries. Not just to your players, but also to players on other teams and players whose absence may give your guys more opportunities. Then consider plain ineffectiveness, which is virtually unpredictable. How about the relative strength or weakness of your opponents? A winner this year may be a second or third place team some other year. For example, the 2001 Barbarryans would have given this year's version a run, but had the misfortune of competing with the

*Continued on next page – BarBarryans*

## **Thoughts on September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

*It's Down to the Wire*

### **Ed Feldman**

Owner

#### **The race for first**

Looks like Barry should win. Ok, I know he is up 8 points and with 10 days left that is not a big leap to take. However the data supports this; consider: In 5 categories Lee cannot move up or down. He can gain both gain and lose points in each of the other 5 categories. The best he can do is go up 6 points which gets him to 97 while can only lose 3 points. Yes that would put Lee ahead of Barry but Lee would have to go hog wild for 10 straight days while Barry would have to have his team fall off the face of the earth. That is not happening. Take into account that with a very strong 10 days Barry could gain 8 points easily. Therefore Barry caps off a nice 4 year run including this year with finishes of 2,5,2 &1. It looks like there is a new sheriff in town.

#### **The race for second**

With a poor final 10 days Lee can lose 4 points bringing him to 87. Frank is already at 88.5 and move up 5.5 points fairly easily ending the season strong. That gets Frank to 94 points meaning that Lee would need to go up 3.5 points to take second. Prediction: Lee retains second.

#### **The race for third**

You read about Frank above. There are 2 points out there for me to take which would get me to 88. With some very good luck for me and bad luck for Frank there are two categories I can catch him in. His ratio is 1.3295 while mine is 1.3379. Not likely to catch him here but possible. I hope he has a lot of Coors Field appearances left. The other category is batting average where I need him to hit about .220 the remainder of the season to pass him in batting average. If I can take these 2 points from him I think I will take third. Unfortunately I don't think I will, so third will go to Frank.

#### **There is no race for fourth**

#### **The race for fifth**

Ira is currently 5.5 points ahead of Ron. The most Ron can gain is 5 points where he takes a point from Ira in home runs. This would get Ron ahead of Ira by a 1/2 point. Unfortunately for Ron, he is 6 homers behind Ira

*Continued on next page – Thoughts*

## BarBarryans

*Continued from page 3*

Master Blasters who that year happened to be perhaps the most dominating team in league history.

We have probably all had the experience of believing after the draft that your team will compete, only to have the team falter and collapse. Look no further than Double D this season. I, and others, initially picked them as the favorites, and they finished well out of the money. Often, events are out of your control and it seems like you have no input into how your team does.

Take a player from my team as an example. I drafted Roger Clemens for \$21, not so much because I had to have him, but because he was one of several pitchers I thought worth that amount, and he came up at a particular time in the draft. I could have just as easily taken an equally ranked pitcher had his name been tossed out. I just had no idea that Clemens would do as well as he did and would be the Cy Young favorite at the end of the year. Hey, I could have been stuck with an injured Andy Pettitte. Luck was with me.

And its not like I was lucky or made good picks in all my acquisitions. All of my most expensive players underperformed: Andrew Jones at \$34, Derek Lee (33), Pat Burrell (25), and Mike Piazza (24) failed to produce one 100 RBI or one 100 run season between them! Nor did any of these supposed sluggers crack the top 15 NL HR hitters. So much for my skill as a drafter.

Having credited my success to luck and bashed my own draft, I will however, now take this opportunity as the winner's prerogative, to point out where I did succeed. That was at the end of the draft, where I had perhaps my finest Roto moment.

As the draft came to a close, I still needed three hitters when everyone else was done. I inquired, just to be sure, 'everyone else is done in offense, right?' Having confirmed this, I called out, 'Tony Womack, \$1'. The groans from the other owners were audible. Then, 'Rob Mackowiak, \$1'. Few groans, but I was happy. For my last pick, 'Endy Chavez, \$1'. Well, no groans here; this was a reach.

So what did I get for my \$3? Womack was at least a \$20 player, as he hit .307, scored 91 runs and stole 26 bases. Mackowiak was arguably at least a \$15 player based on his 17 HRs, 13 SBs, 75 RBIs, and 65 runs, although the .248 BA took some luster off. And poor Endy Chavez, the last player taken in the draft? He stole 32 bases, scored a respectable 65 runs and batted a credible .277, (although he was not in my lineup all season and I did not benefit from all of these numbers).

I guess, in the end then, that both luck and skill is necessary to win this league. Good luck to all next year. Please though, leave some luck for me.



## Thoughts

*Continued from page 3*

so the chances of getting this critical point is very small. The most Ira can go down is 1.5 points. Honorable mention here should go to Doug who is currently tied with Ron at 63. The problem is Doug can only go up 2 points. Sorry Doug & Ron, But Ira is finishing fifth, Ron sixth and Doug seventh.

### **The race for last**

Dishonorable mention here goes to the Monarchs and Red Storm in the fight for the basement. The Monarchs may go from first to worst, which is bad but does not sting nearly as much as it would for Red Storm who would finish last for the third time in four years. While finishing 11<sup>th</sup> does not make the Red Storm season any better I am still pulling for him and therefore say that the Monarchs will finish in the basement.

All in all, I think the standings will stay as they are today, September 23, 2004 with the exception of Ron breaking the tie with Doug and pulling ahead for sole possession of 6th. In 10 days time we will see if I am right.



## Some Records Were Meant to be Broken

*This Years Famous and Infamous*

### Ed Feldman

Record keeper

With the season over it is time to take a look at records, stats and other miscellaneous information.

On the hitting side of the house there were no new records on the good side and there were not that were even challenged. On the bad side there were no new records either although 2 came close.

First is the second worst ever stolen bases total for a season which stands at 56 by the 1998 Texas Longhorns. This year's challenger to this ignominious record was the Arms & Hammers who compiled the devastating total of 57 swipes for the 2003 campaign. Arms need a stolen base by Eric Brunlett of the Astros on the second to last day of the season to avoid the hall of shame. I think the problem John has is that his team is the 'Arms & Hammers' and he forgot about speed. Hey John, next year may want to name your team 'Arms, Legs & Hammers'

The other near miss to the hall of shame belongs to the Monarchs in batting average. The second worst mark all-time is .2543 set by the 1993 Flatulators (a.k.a. Master Blasters). The Monarchs need an offensive surge the last day of the season to bring their staggering .2542 batting average above this mark. Fortunately for them they had the likes of Jason Michaels go 2-3 and Freddy Guzman go 2-4 to cap a 7 for 18 and .3889 average for the last day of the season bring their season BA to .2548. Nice job.

On the pitching side there were two records that were broken, 1 for better and one for worse. On the good side, the Monarchs set an all-time high in saves with 100. They easily eclipsed their own high water mark of 95 set in 1997. Congratulations on this accomplishment in what were an otherwise dismal season for them.

On the bad side, a record that was set just two years ago, and thought to stand for quite a while, was broken. The Master Blasters beat the standing second all-time worst record in saves of 3 set by the Marauders in 2002. The 'Blasters managed to accumulate 2 accidental saves this season which kept them from tying the worst mark of 1 set in 1993 by the Porn Flakes or even beating it. Seems like the Master Blasters forgot about pitching this year, maybe they should change back their name to the Flatulators.



## When Prediction Meets Reality

*It Doesn't Happen Too Often*

### Ed Feldman

Owner

Coming out of the draft I felt I had an upper 70's team at about 77, 78 points. I thought I would have the best pitching at about 55 points and have mid to upper 20's in hitting. My one Achilles heal as I saw it was that I had no depth on the hitting side and had question marks. Would Edmonds stay healthy? Could Wilson comeback healthy enough to reach even his career average? Would Vinny Castilla fall off the face of the earth even with the Colorado effect? I must admit I was nervous about my hitting.

Some things went against me this season such as Pettitte & Millwood for a combined \$39 and Preston Wilson and Nick Johnson for a combined \$51. That's a total of \$90 for about \$15 worth of actual production. That's bad luck but I believe that while you can't control luck you can put yourself into a position to get lucky and I didn't do that on these guys. I know everyone has injuries but if MY players stayed healthy I think I might have given Barry a run for the money and definitely would have had a real chance at 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Things that did work out in my favor include Castilla leading the NL in RBI's with 131, Rolen coming in second with 124 and Edmonds 6<sup>th</sup> with 111. Considering that I finished the season with 5.5 point in RBI's it shows that not many other players contributed there.

On the pitching side with Pettitte & Millwood doing anything I saw my season going up in flames but this is really where I caught some breaks. First up is Jason Marquis who ended the season with a 3.71 era and 15 wins. I would have signed up for 4.25 era and 10-12 wins to start the season. Another big break was the turn around of Tomko. At the All-star break he had a 5.2 era but ended the season with a very respectable 4.03. That definitely helped. One other lucky part, where I felt I put myself in a position to be lucky and it paid off, was Worrell. When Wagner went down for an extended period Worrell became the closer and recorded 19 saves. This was the best-case scenario I could have hoped for coming out of the draft.

The final thing that helped me was my two trades. Talk

*Continued on next page – Reality*

## 5 Year Analysis

*What have You Done For Me Lately*

### Ed Feldman

Owner

Looking at success over the full lifetime of the league is all well and fine but lets see who has been good over the last 5 years. In 2000 we finally made it to a 12 team league and 11 of the 12 current teams participated in the 2000 campaign. The lone team that was not a part of that season is the Marauders who joined the league in 2002.

<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Overall Rank</u>	<u>Money Finishes the Last 5 years</u>
<b>Master Blasters</b>	3.8	4
<b>BarBarryans</b>	3.8	4
<b>Mutts</b>	5.2	3
<b>Futurians</b>	5.4	2
<b>Double D</b>	6.2	2
<b>Shu's Crew</b>	6.2	2
<b>Arms &amp; Hammers</b>	6.8	2
<b>Monarchs</b>	7.2	2
<b>Eight Men Out</b>	7.2	1
<b>KrackerJacks</b>	7.4	1
<b>Red Storm</b>	8.8	2
<b>Marauders</b>	11.0	0

It is not surprising that the Master Blasters tops the list with a 3.8 average position finish (APF). Although he is tied with the BarBarryans I give the Master Blasters top honors as they have finished in first twice to the BarBarryans once. That said, it is clear that there is a new sheriff in town and his name is Barry.

While the Mutts rank 3<sup>rd</sup> on this list they finished 9<sup>th</sup> the last two years and are riding the coattails of his '00-'02 seasons. Time to shape up Craig, are you losing it or is it already lost?

After Craig the waters are not surprisingly muddied, as illustrated above, with a bunch of teams being money teams twice and having a middle of the pack APF between 5.4 – 7.4, a narrow range indeed. This illustrates what we already know, that this is a competitive league.

One note here. Since I proclaimed back in the April issues that I suck at Roto and have the 4th best average out of the 12 teams over the last 5 years, what does that say about the rest of you? Nothing good. You better do your homework next March.



## Reality

*Continued from page 5*

about getting lucky, I trade Doug Pettitte & Nick Johnson for Odalis Perez & Ray Durham. After the first week of the trade Johnson had 10 rbi's for Doug where he had only 23 for me in 207 at bats. Doesn't sound lucky you say? The next day was when Johnson took a ball off the face he went out for the season. Shortly after that Pettitte went out for the season as well so I ended up with Perez & Durham who wound up giving me good numbers instead of two stiffs from the free agent pool. Talk about luck.

If you told me I would have ended up in 80's in points this year but not get anything out of Pettitte, Millwood, Wilson & Johnson I would have said your crazy and that I would need a bunch of other things to go my way. It just goes to show, it's better to be lucky than good. My prediction for next year? Pain.



## Thanks...

*...For Another Great Season!*

### Ed Feldman

Commissioner

Thank you everyone for another great season, our 14<sup>th</sup>. Stay tuned for some gala events next season in the celebration of our 15<sup>th</sup> season.

There were exciting races from first thru seventh illustrating the parity in the league this year. Congratulations to Barry for his first win; as well know, it is not easy to win in this league.

I am already looking forward to our 15<sup>th</sup> season next year and I hope you are too. There are only about 110 days until pitchers and catchers report and about 60 days until Craig sends out an email asking if anyone is ready trade.

I expect the races to be as tight once again as this coming year. Good luck everyone.



### YOGI BERRA QUOTES

“We made too many wrong mistakes”

“You can observe a lot just by watching”

“It gets late early out there”

## Miscellaneous Information

*I Bet You Didn't Know...*

### Ed Feldman

Owner

- ✓ The 97.0 points by the BarBarryans is the lowest point total for a winner since we expanded to a 12 team league in 2000.
- ✓ It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row that at least one team has failed to reach the 1000 RBI mark after having at least one team do it 4 straight seasons.
- ✓ It is the 9<sup>th</sup> straight season that at least one team has scored 1000 Runs or more.
- ✓ It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row that the last place team in Saves had 5 or fewer Saves.
- ✓ It is the 9<sup>th</sup> straight season that at least one team has had 1000 Strikeouts or more.
- ✓ The 80.8% of the total overall points represented by the BarBarryans final 97.0 points represents the lowest overall percentage of total points by a winner since the 1999 Grand Salami (a.k.a. Mutts) had 86.0 points in an 11 team league for an overall 78.2% of the total points.
- ✓ The average number of years in the league per current VLFB team is 9.8 with a total of 118 years worth of VLFB experience. Makes us sound old.
- ✓ In the 14 year history of the league, only 7 different teams have won it all. 5 teams are still active.
- ✓ The Master Blasters hold the record for most consecutive years in the money with 6. Multiple teams are tied for second with 4.
- ✓ It is the second time in the last three season that first place has beat second place by 3 points.
- ✓ Craig has kept the same team name (Mutts) for a personal record of 4 consecutive years. His average position finish with this name? 6.3. Ouch!
- ✓ The KrackerJacks have improved in the standings a league record 5 straight years (11<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>). Starting out so low does help in setting this record.
- ✓ Shu's Crew & Red Storm share the record for best finish for a new owner in year one, 6<sup>th</sup>.
- ✓ Ron had a bad year in 2000 finishing 12<sup>th</sup>. In his other 10 years he never finished lower than 6<sup>th</sup>.



## Average Position Finish

*A Look at The Changes*

With the 14<sup>th</sup> VLFB season completed lets take a look at how the average position finishes (APF) have changed.

<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Highest Finish</u>	<u>Lowest Finish</u>
1 Mudhens	3.2	1	7
2 Uptown Studs	4.0	3	5
3 <b>Master Blasters</b>	4.2	1	9
4 <b>Mutts</b>	4.7	1	9
5 Ryan Express	4.9	1	10
6 <b>Shu's Crew</b>	5.1	2	12
7 Futurians	5.9	1	10
8 <b>Arms &amp; Hammers</b>	6.1	2	9
9 <b>BarBarryans</b>	6.2	1	11
10 <b>Double D</b>	6.4	3	10
11 <b>Monarchs</b>	6.8	1	12
12 <b>Eight Men Out</b>	6.8	2	11
13 <b>KrackerJacks</b>	7.4	3	11
14 Texas Longhorns	7.4	2	11
15 Ball Four	7.8	5	10
16 <b>Red Storm</b>	8.3	3	12
17 Porn Flakes	8.7	6	10
18 Copperheads	9.0	9	9
19 Beavis	11.0	11	11
20 <b>Marauders</b>	11.0	10	12

Note: Bold = Active Team

As the above show, congratulations are due to the BarBarryans, Eight Men Out and KrackerJacks as all three have reached new personal best finishes this season with 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. Well done. A small congratulations to the Marauders as they set a new personal high as well, but that high being only 10<sup>th</sup> place it is not much to brag about. Unfortunately for the Monarchs, they set a new personal low by finishing 12<sup>th</sup>. Better luck year fella's.

A quick analysis of the position finishes shows the Master Blasters increasing their lead over the Mutts by a full half a position finish and averaging and excellent 4.2 over 14 years. Now that's doing it right. Just to toot my own horn a little, I am 4<sup>th</sup> best on the active list meaning that I am better than 8 other teams. May that continue to be the case; I would be happy with that.

I am putting a challenge out to the Marauders to get their average position finish to single digits at the conclusion of the 2005 campaign. In order to do this they need finish 6<sup>th</sup> or better. The two team above you, the Copperheads and Beavis were each only in the league for 1 season

thus explaining their poor average. Next year will be your 4<sup>th</sup> season so lets see some improvement. (One hint: stop trading with the Krackerjacks).

The biggest movers in overall APF were the KrackerJacks who improved an overall 1.1 in APF and moved from 16<sup>th</sup> on the list to 13<sup>th</sup>. Next up is the BarBarryans who posted a .7 overall APF improvement and moved from 11<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> in the rankings. Last on the big improvement side of the coin is Eight Men Out posting a .5 overall APF improvement. While he is tied for 11<sup>th</sup>\12<sup>th</sup> overall he has greatly closed the gap that those ahead of him had. On the down side, only one team moved significantly and that was the Monarchs as a result of their last place finish. This season's finish moved them from 8<sup>th</sup> overall to a tie for 11<sup>th</sup>\12<sup>th</sup>. Better luck next year guys.

