

The Series 2011 Mariners and Phillies
By Chris Holt

The 2011 CBL World Series is now in the books, and it got me thinking that we may have seen quite a few firsts with the matchup of the Philadelphia Phillies and Seattle Mariners. To begin with, the contestants each entered the post-season via the wild-card route, with Oakland outdistancing the M's, and the boys from Gotham, nipping the Phillies. Not sure that had ever happened before. Add in that in order to even squeak in through the wild card service entrance, there had been some need for in-season construction on the fly; early on Josh solved a deficiency vs. LHP at catcher by obtaining Carlos Ruiz from the Indians then engineered a trade for Johan Santana to bolster his rotation, while also adding infield depth with Brendan Ryan. Meanwhile Chris swung for the fences literally, acquiring failing (in real life), flailing slugger Adam Dunn for prospect Domonic Brown. And to complete the unique nature of this series, we saw what may have been the first time in history where the combatants were able to sit in the same room, not a virtual chat/game room, to actually square off. Josh and I have been playing Strat-o-Matic baseball competitively in a couple different leagues together for about 20 years, and while we had each made world series in past seasons/leagues, this was the first time we had managed to synchronize appearances. All this added up to what should be a really tasty treat. So, without further buildup, here was your 2011 Continental Baseball League World Series.

G1- Tommy Hunter SEA -v- Cole Hamels PHI: What, no King Felix? Oh yeah, that's right, the CBL player usage rules reared it's realism-based head again, and the King remained on the bench at rest, thanks to his game 7 performance in the ALCS against Oakland. Not to worry, pitching purists were not to be disappointed in this one, but it was not always easy. In the bottom of the first, Hunter experienced a bit of a case of WS nerves, as he walked leadoff hitter Jason Werth, and after retiring the next two batters, walked Bautista, and then hit Ryan Howard to put runners everywhere with two outs, Juan Uribe up. Perfect spot for a big fly from the station to station home teamers, but Uribe lined to second, and we found out that runners are really only runners when someone does something to MAKE them run. Crisis averted Mariners. Meanwhile, Hamels steamed through the second, but ran into choppy waters in the third as Luis Castillo opened with a double and Justin Smoak dinked a weak single to put them at the corners. Mariner's brain trust used tremendous odds to put the squeeze play on, hoping for the game's first run, only to see Paul Janish pop out to the first baseman. One out, runners still at the corners, Ichiro up. Stretch . . . Squat in the box. . . . Raise up, tug on the right jersey sleeve And in classic Ichiro style, slap a single into right field to plate the first run of the game. Or make that the ONLY run of the game, as Hunter completed the first 5, and 5 more relievers passed the baton through the final 4 innings of a two hit shutout. Hamels went the distance with a 5 hitter, but for naught. Mariners 1, Phillies 0

G2- Brandon Morrow SEA -v- Cliff Lee PHI: What, no Johan Santana?? Again, a head slapping revelation from the M's, as midseason pickup Santana, and for that matter, Carlos Silva owner of a 1 hit shutout in the ALCS, were not even on the world series roster. Not to worry, they weren't particularly missed in another taut pitching duel. Lee blasted through the first 4, before facing a threat in the 5th when a Carl Crawford leadoff single followed by a Jonathan Herrera single brought another great squeeze opportunity and Wilson Valdez laid one down with the odds in Seattle's corner, only to see Crawford erased on a fielders choice! For the second time in as many games (and tries) it was another failed squeeze where the odds favored the bunter. In the 6th, the M's squandered an Ichiro leadoff triple when pinch hitter Luis Castillo hit into a fielders choice and Ichiro was thrown out at the plate. Meanwhile Morrow was keeping up with his opponent, treating the Philly fans to a free air conditioning seminar, as 14 of the home guys swung and missed at his offerings through 7. Cool breezes in the City of Brotherly Love. In the 8th, the slap hitting M's opened with a Valdez single and an Ichiro single to put runners at the corners. Lefty killer Carlos Ruiz squared up a Lee offering for the first run of the game with a double, Crawford followed with a run scoring single, and Franklin Gutierrez chased Lee from the game with a triple. Although the Phillies got a big fly from Joey Bats in the bottom of the frame, it was a solo shot, and only resulted in the final score averting a shutout. 3 more relievers cleaned up what Morrow started. Final - Mariners 3 Phillies 1.

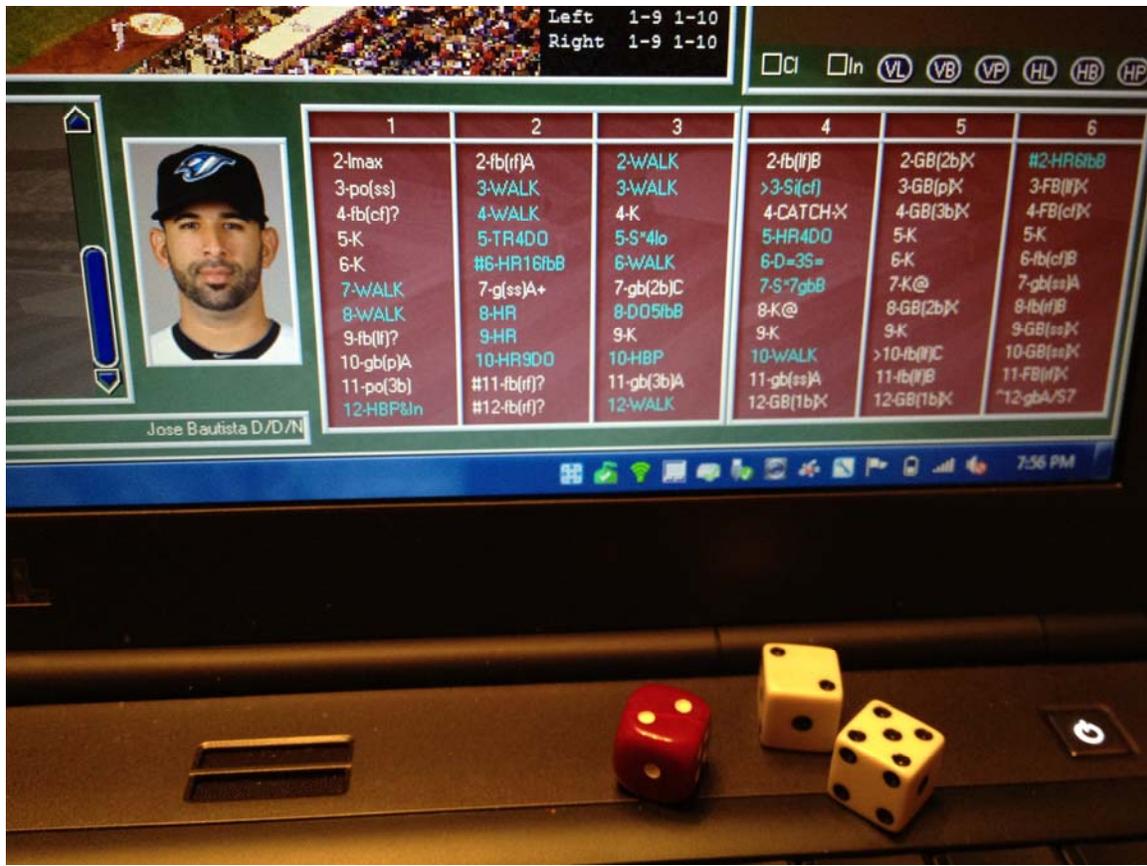
G3- Down 0-2 with one run scored in two games in the friendly confines, the Phillies boarded the plane for the long trip to Safeco. This could be on the verge of getting ugly given that the King was finally up in the rotation, facing Ian Kennedy. Wonder if the "Love Boat" was missing part of their crew, as Gopher, er Ian

gave up dingers to Adam Jones and A-rod in the first inning, and another 2 run homer to Adam in the 5th. Meanwhile Hernandez was mostly untouchable as he struck out 11 enroute to a 7-1 complete game win.

G4- Jamie Moyer PHI -v- David Pauley SEA The pitching matchup EVERYONE was anticipating for this series, right? While Josh dug deep again into the Mariner basement for a “best matchup” pitcher with his backwards righty, the Phils turned to the ancient former-Mariner to try and stop, well the Mariners. And if this is the last game that either/both of these guys pitch in their careers, what a way to go out. Pauley went the distance with a 3 hitter, the only blemish coming with a third inning solo homer to Jose Bautista. Game set and match to the Mariners??? Well, actually no, as Jamie one upped him, scattering 6 hits and a walk through 7 tense innings before passing off to the Philly pen. In the 9th, a walk to Lance Berkman and a single to Jonathan Herrera added quite a bit of tension to the situation, but Craig Breslow bailed out Lidge to earn the save, striking out Carl Crawford. Final - Phillies 1 Mariners 0.

G5- Hamels PHI -v- Hunter SEA Last chance to clinch at home with a rematch of game 1 starters, and another pitchers’ duel broke out, although it was not for lack of the Phillies trying. Hunter’s 6 column features a homer heavy smorgasbord of options, and the dice LIKED 6; unfortunately, they also liked the strikeout/flyout chances on that column, as the visitors hit best column about a half dozen times over the first 5 innings only to be repeatedly turned away. The only run of the first 5 came when the Phils strung together three singles, the last from Adam Dunn to go up 1-0. Finally in the 6th, little big man Jimmy Rollins cashed in on a 6 roll, muscling a two run homer off Hunter to go up 3-0. Meanwhile, Hamels blew through 8 unchallenged, but in the 9th, things got interesting, as after two quiet outs, Wilson Valdez stroked a pinch hit single, and Carl Crawford followed that with an improbable homer to move the M’s within a run, A-rod up. Chris using his best Charlie Manuel strategy remained with Hamels limp left arm, and A-rod spanked a single to really get the crowd on their feet, and Josh to working EVERY possible strategic angle to tying the game. A pinch runner Dyson guaranteed a runner in scoring position, so that was the move, but he could not obtain his lead to also steal 3rd, so it came down to Jonathan Herrera versus Phillies closer Brad Lidge, as Charlie, er, Chris had smoked his better closer Breslow in the previous two games and did not have a better matchup. Sometimes things work for all the wrong reasons, as the roll came off Lidge and he struck out Herrera for the win. Final - Phillies 3 Mariners 2.

G6- Hernandez SEA -v- Lee PHI Well, this might provide us with the answer to the age old question that (real life) Mariner fans had in 2010 when they wondered who was better between their two aces. Of course, we had no way to answer that at the time, but game 6 might have given us a glimpse, and the combatants did not disappoint as each cruised through 8 innings with a shutout. Interestingly, Josh had commented at the beginning of the game that both pitchers had enough left in the use tank to go to 12 innings and it really looked like it was going to go there, but like a bolt of lightning, leading off the bottom of the 9th, Adam Jones popped a homer. We had been rolling manual dice on critical outs, but neither of us had the foresight here to have remembered to turn off the computer rolls, and so it came like a bolt of lightning. Crack, boom, Mariners up by 1. We promptly shut off the computer dice, and Ichiro followed an out later with a double, which was followed by a walk to Ruiz. Drama now, but Lee finished his CG, inducing Carl Crawford into a lineout to Howard. On to the bottom of the 9th, and with the Phillies sluggers due up, so if ever a team had a punchers chance at a knockout, or at least a tie, we were it. Midseason pickup Dunn was first and he grounded out, followed by CBL homer leader Bautista. Best column #2, and here the Phillies rolled them one at a time, and the first roll, on the lucky tiny red dice was 2! Huge homer chances abounded (almost 40% by the numbers), and the tension was too much, as Chris closed his eyes, and rolled again. Pretty much anything would have extended the inning, but in a dice roll immortalized by Josh via I-PHONE picture, and no doubt ready to be placed in the CBL archives for eternity, he too grounded out.



Queue Ryan Howard to the plate, two down, needing to extend the Phillies season. Sound familiar to something we saw in real life this year? Well, this time Ryan came through (sort of) singling to extend the inning, Juan Uribe up. Debate ensued as to whether to stick with the guy who had a chance with one swing to end it or pinch hit for someone who had better than a .190 average. Placido Polanco was the ultimate answer. Josh considered the better strategic options of a Hong Chi Kuo matchup, but got a blast of latin machismo when he went to the mound to consult with the King, and therefore decided to leave him in. Best column #4 was rolled again, and Placido rolled a single split chance 1-7 to extend the inning one more time. Again, the split dice comes out, and the bones flew . . . Only to come up 11. This wasn't craps, and so rather than a winner, the Phillies bowed out the loser in another great pitchers dues. Final Mariners 1, Phillies 0, game set World Series to the Mariners 4 games to 2.

Quite a discussion between the managers over a WS MVP, and although it was razor close with Felix Hernandez two complete game wins, the final nod went to the lightning bolt sudden impact of Adam Jones who led both teams in homers with 3 and RBI with 5. Too many other good pitching performances not to recognize the only viable offensive star of the series.

Which leads us to probably the final unique quality of this series; it appears that the steroid era has finally passed in the CBL too. I cannot remember a series where power pitching was so completely at the forefront of a series. Had someone told me that Phillies pitching would have given up 1-3-7-0-2 and 1 runs over 6 games, I would take that outcome EVERY day. And yet, the other side was even better, shackling the most prolific two homer hitters in the 2011 CBL, and giving up 6, yes 6 runs over 6 games. So three combined shutouts in 6 games, 3 1-0 games no less. Great way to usher in the pitching era to the CBL. Build those power staffs now guys, the days of 9-8 slugfests may have just passed. Or not, but for this year, pitching rules.

Congratulations to Josh, now a 3 time CBL champion, joining a very select group of managers/teams, (the Hammer with 4 combined, Arient's three Cubs championships, Larry Spencer and three Astros, and Rick

Baker who did it thrice with the Indians). Time to get busy for 2012. Who will be next to add to the history of Clineman, your team?