

The Mariner Muse

Your (off)-daily source for Seattle Mariners commentary and general thoughts on baseball



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What the Mariners must accomplish if they are to limp out of difficult June

Travis Smith

It is June 4th, and the Mariners are currently 15 games over .500 – their best mark to-date since 2003, when they were an astounding 21 games over. That team wound up winning 93 games and statistically should have made the playoffs (for more on that, read FiveThirtyEight's article about how that 2002 squad was one of the unluckiest teams in recent MLB history). Yet somehow they wound up finishing second in the AL West, behind

Happy Off-Day!

Welcome back to another year of the Mariner Muse, where we try to return a bit of what you miss on days when the Ners don't play. For baseball is beautiful in its rhythmic repetition, its methodic frequency: a ballgame a day keeps the doctor away.

But when off-days roll around, everything goes out of whack. You've lost your regular 3-hour dose of baseball, and quite often you don't know how to cope.

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one of Billy Beane's *Moneyball* A's, who won 96 that year.

The bottom line is this: 15 games over .500 in early June is a simply incredible spot for this team – who was 4 games *under* .500 at this time last year – to be. The Ners are currently lead the World Champion Astros by one game for the AL West Division lead, are ahead of the “we spent a ton of money to be good this year” California Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, Los Angeles, CA by 5.5 games, and trail the “we always spend a ton of money to be good” New York Yankees by 3 games for the coveted 1st AL Wild Card spot. Tl;dr = things are good.

The reason things are good is because the

Mariners have handled business when they should: over the month of May, for example, the team played 20 games against teams with records below .500 and went 13-7. (Sprinkle in the great sweep of the .500 Oakland ballclub, and we went 16-7 in 23 games). Seattle has defeated the teams that they should beat.

But things are about ready to get real, real tough.

The Ners' June calendar is scary to say the least. From tomorrow until the July 2nd off-day, Seattle will play 26 games – 15 of which are against teams with a record above .500. But it's not just that these teams are winning more than they're losing; the teams we're about to face are winning a *lot* more than they're losing.



Ryon Healy celebrates with Jean Segura after Healy's wild walk-off double against the Angels on May 6th

After a 37-22 start to the year, I can't believe I am about to say this: I hope the Ners go 12-14 in the upcoming 26 games. Obviously I hope they do better than that, but when you look at the impending schedule, to ask for even 13-13 is demanding a lot. 12-14, however, is feasible – and if Seattle can find a way to do this, the team will escape June with a 49-36 record. That's still 13 games over .500; that's still prime postseason positioning.

Here's what's coming up, and my assessment of

what the Ners must take in each series so that they can limp out of June and hopefully go back to sprinting in July.

2 Games @ HOU: 1-1

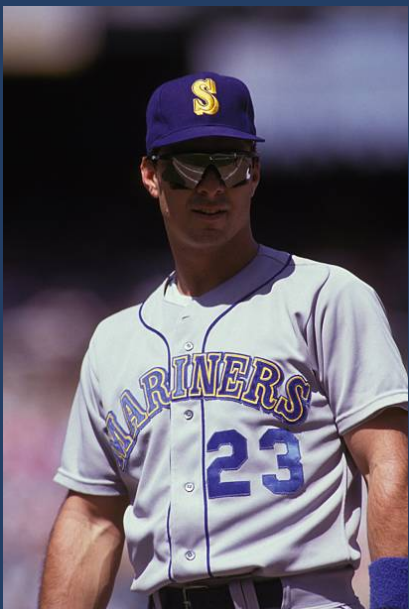
This is a weird series, as it's only two games away. But if Seattle can snag one of two, it will be a big-time win for us. That W *has* to come on Paxton's game (Tuesday). The Big Maple always seems to throw well against the Astros, and we're going to need it again if we have a shot to win one at all. **Record: 1-1.**

Where Are They Ner?

Tino Martinez | First Base

Ner from: 1990-1995

Best Ner Moment: While the majority of Tino's career in Seattle was filled with highlights, his 1995 season was easily the best. Specifically, Martinez' best moment as a Ner came in Game 3 of the ALDS (against the Yankees, who he would ironically be traded to in the off-season). With Seattle down 2 games and trailing by a run, Tino launched a 2-run dinger in the bottom of the 5th (that's him rounding the bases above) to put the Ners ahead and spark their incredible 3-game winning streak that propelled them to the ALCS.



Where MM Guessed He Is Ner: Despite his success in Seattle, Tino is best remembered as a Yankee. He was a staple of Joe Torre's dynasty, winning 4 World Series in pinstripes and taking home the crown in the 1997 Home Run Derby. Needless to say, we think he's living in New York and appears regularly on YES network to reminisce with old teammates Bernie Williams and Paul O'Neil about the "good old days."

Where He Actually is Ner: After retiring from baseball in 2005, Tino had an embattled stint as the Marlins hitting coach in 2013 before giving up his coaching dreams for good. Now, he spends the majority of his time in Tampa Bay, where he lives with his wife. Tino returned to school in 2011 and earned his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Tampa, which probably looks nice placed alongside the many trophies he has won at Florida celebrity golf tournaments.



4 Games @ TB: 2-2

This series will be a sneaky tough one, in my opinion. Tampa is not good – we just swept them – but they aren’t bad, either. Remember yesterday Seattle native Blake Snell absolutely cooked the Ners, just as he did last year in TB? I’m scared he (and possibly Chris Archer) will do it again. To ask any team to win a 4-game series away is, in my opinion, always too high of a demand. So if the M’s can split this series, I’ll be happy. **Record: 3-3.**

3 Games vs. LAA: 2-1

Not only are the Angels my least favorite team in all of sports, they’re also our boogeyman team and clearly the squad that we’re battling for that second AL Wild Card spot. LAA has already snagged two of three against us this season, and we are going to need to beat them down the stretch if we’re going to have a shot at October.

Since we’ll be playing this series at home, we simply must take 2 of 3, no questions asked. **Record: 5-4.**

4 Games vs. BOS: 1-3

The Ners are probably going to be stretched at this point, after what’s bound to be an intense series against Los Angeles. Boston is the best team in baseball, and even though we are playing at home, I do not see the Mariners winning more than 2 games in this series – and even with that, I think 2 is a stretch. I desperately want to split this 4-gamer, but I think we win 1...and to be honest, I’m fine with that. **Record: 6-7.**

3 Games @ NYN: 1-2

Yay, what a way to kick off an east coast road trip. The Yankees are laying claim to the first AL Wild Card position, and might even wind up challenging Boston for the AL East Title as the season proceeds. Regardless, it’s looking like

Top 5 Simsisms of May

By now, you know that we absolutely love Ners broadcaster Dave Sims. He's got one of the best spirits in the game, has an extensive knowledge of baseball history, and is a pretty good broadcaster to boot. But there's one thing in particular we love about Dave...let's just say he has a "tendency for the obscure." At least a few times a game, Mr. Sims makes an off-the-cuff comment that's just a little bit strange. We call them "Simsisms," a tongue-twisting word that attempts to label the brain-twisting phrases that at times emerge from Dave's mouth, and at the end of each month, we break down the best 5 that we heard. We can't catch them all, but the ones we do catch are normally pretty darn good. And even though Dave was on the DL for the majority of May, we still caught 5 Simsisms for you to ponder:



"When you're out of sync, it's like you're in a tuna can out there." (5.28)

Huh. Like, I understand what Dave was trying to reference with this – he was discussing how Felix had struggled recently, and how it's difficult for a pitcher to focus when they're out of whack. Specifically, he was saying that Felix probably feels alone out there on the mound, and that his lack of focus is resulting in tunnel vision of sorts. I get that. But...a tuna can?



"Sorry brah, can't unsee it!" (5.20)

Dave ripped this one out after Jacoby Jones had a simply terrible at bat against Wade LeBlanc, striking out on 3 consecutive bad swings. Blowers then mentioned something about how sometimes, instead of trying to figure out what went wrong, you just need to forget about an AB – and apparently Dave disagreed, for he then said this. Oh, and it definitely was "brah," not "bro."



"Here's Segura getting kicked in the head...and that's not to mention a James Dean song." (5.26)

Sometimes, we just gotta love Dave for his obscure knowledge of old-time actors and classic movie trivia. Remember the Poss Adams/Little Joe Cartwright Simsism of 2017? Well, apparently James Dean has a song about getting kicked in the head. Idk, I defer to Dave.



"Can we get a little rolllllll tide?" (5.20)

This is not an uncommon phrase to hear on TV. After the ESPN ad a few years ago, the University of Alabama slogan is often referenced in the sports world – just as Dave did here when introducing Wade LeBlanc before a start. But the reason it was included this month is because, more than any baseball announcer I've ever heard, Dave *loves* to talk about where MLB players went to college...as if he's broadcasting an NBA game. Tbh, he may think he is broadcasting an NBA game sometimes.



"My wife asked if I wanted to go paddle-boarding, and I said 'I'll commentate.'" (5.28)

Two things: 1) Dave references his occupation with his wife. 2) Dave is scared of paddle-boarding.

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whoever finishes in the second AL WC spot will be traveling to either Beantown or the Big Apple for a one-game playoff in October...and if it's going to be the M's, we might as well get some experience in now. We will not win this series in New York – but I think we can take a game. (Perhaps Paxton, if he gets a start). **Record: 7-9.**

4 Games @ BOS: 1-3

Out of the frying pan, into the fire. By the end of this series, the Ners (and our incredibly shallow rotation) will have played 14 straight games against teams that are well over .500. We'll be exhausted; we'll be struggling mightily. We will not win more than a game or two in this series... but we *need* to win at least one. If we do, I see it as a success. **Record: 8-11.**

4 Games @ BAL: 2-2

Hallelujah! The Mariners finally can relax a bit, heading into a hitter's park to play a Baltimore squad with a team ERA that looks more like a radar gun reading than it does a pitching statistic. While I definitely think the team (as long as they're not too tired) can win 3 in this series, I defer to what I said earlier: it's unfair to expect a 4-game series win when it's away. So I say we take 2, and I'm happy with 2. **Record: 10-13.**

3 Games vs. KC: 2-1

Yes, the final game is technically in July, but for the sake of evening out the month and this series, I'll call it part of June (there's an off-day after it, anyway). The Ners will finally return home from their brutal east coast swing to face a pretty bad Royals squad, and Seattle will hopefully be feeling some good mojo after the Orioles series. The team can easily go 2-1 here. **Record: 12-14.**

So there you have it. If the Ners go 12-14 over our next 26 games, we will be entering July with a 49-36 record, which is probably enough to keep us tied with (if not still above) the Angels, and somewhere within striking distance of Houston. That would be a wonderful place to be.

To conclude: given our demanding schedule, inevitable injuries, and shallow rotation, it's simply unfair to expect that Seattle will go over .500 in what's left of June. We've played great ball recently, and this has given us a nice cushion for us to fall on when we play the big-time teams. We're allowed to use that cushion (a bit) in June to ensure that we don't fall too far – and that we're still better than we have been in 16 years as we enter the second half of the season.

12-14, baby. Here we go.

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