

F R O M     T H E     B U L L E T I N

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League Owners/Managers:

Welcome to the 1987 season, fellow baseball mavens. Allow me to extend my congratulations, or sympathies, as the case may be, to each of you on your 1987 draft selections.

Thanks to Rick for hosting our Third Annual Hot Stove League Draft. As usual, the draft was a most auspicious event, and I was highly honored to be in that elite company.

For your edification and entertainment, enclosed please find the following:

1. Constitution of the Hot Stove League, Eastern Nebraska Division;
2. Bylaws of the Hot Stove League, Eastern Nebraska Division;
3. 1987 Hot Stove League - Initial Team Rosters;
4. Photojournal of 1987 draft.

And now, what you've all been waiting for, this humble scribe's 1987 draft recapitulation and evaluation, given to you in the Skipper's predicted order of finish.

1. OMAHA ROYALS

There can be no question this year as to who will be drinking champagne at the end of the season. Although my high sense of modesty tugs away at me, I must come clean and proclaim the Royals as the best team picked in this year's draft. Not unlike the 1986 draft, this year the old Skipper waltzed through the draft as easily as taking candy from a dumb baby.

It is beyond me how I was able to pick up, by way of example, such remaining plums as Kirby Puckett (sixth round), Oral Hershiser (eighth round), Brett Saberhagen (eleventh round), and Rob Deer (twenty-second round). By the way, lowly league Underbelly, thank you for picking that buzzsaw, Larry Sheets, in the twenty-first round, instead of Rob Deer.

It pretty much goes without saying that, barring critical injuries to key players, the old Skipper's name will be etched onto the Cup in 1987, which no doubt will begin a string of three to retire the Cup to its rightful owner.

2. LINCOLN CUBS

Not even you, Snickler. Not even you can pilot this nifty pack of 25 to a bottom division finish. Last year it would have been a possibility. With the implementation of our new executive council, rest assured that your feeble trading mind will be jealously protected, and the wiley Possum will be unable to clean out your cupboard while the rest of us stand helplessly by.

Apparently, the Cubs' move from Cedar Rapids to Lincoln has sparked new life into Cubs ownership and management, the Snickler. The 1987 draft was a sound one for the Cubs. With the infield quartet of Ripken, Brett, Whitaker and Murray, the Cubs are positioned for a nice season. Naturally, the Cubs have some management deficiencies to overcome, but October should find them in the top three.

Incidentally, Snickler had petitioned the league moniker dubber, myself, for a change of his nickname from Snickler to "the Wizard." Sorry, Snickler. Snickler stays.

### 3. THE BRAVES

Speaking of league nicknames, due to the hue and cry of the other league owners/ managers, Bob's former nickname of "Rookie" is hereby supplanted by the more appropriate pseudonym of "Underbelly" ("U.B." for short). While the U.B. will not finish this season with his face to the pavement, last year's performance was certainly enough to ingrain the nickname forever.

U.B. has picked a magnificent team. That is, he has picked a magnificent team if you don't count pitchers and shortstops with broken wrists. U.B.'s projected starting outfield of Barfield, McReynolds and Bass should rival anyone's, save the Royals'. U.B.'s catchers, second basemen and third basemen, collectively, will rival anyone's. And U.B. has The Man, Mr. Mattingly. Unfortunately, U.B. seems to have forgotten until the tail end of the draft that each team also has nine pitchers. Estimating conservatively, U.B.'s seven starting pitchers should garner, in total, maybe 55 wins. In the loss column, expect many more. And how about U.B.'s relievers? Don Aase had more saves last year than in his previous four seasons combined. There is nothing like that conventional wisdom of picking a guy the season after his career year. U.B. does have the distinction of having picked the strangest-looking ballplayer, back-up reliever Kent "I'd rather be an accountant" Tekulve.

Notwithstanding U.B.'s flaccid pitching staff, an upper division finish this year should be in the cards for the Braves.

### 4. THE TIGERS

Although it pains me greatly to say it, the Big Guy has probably put together the finest pitching staff from front to back which has ever been assembled in the Hot Stove League. This was done, of course, through the aid of two strokes of great fortune. First, the meddling Peter Ueberroth intervened and saw to it that Roger Clemens would open the season with the Red Sox, which none of the other managers anticipated. There are some suggestions that Big Guy did have inside information on Clemens. Secondly, the babbling Possum, in the throes of a debilitating case of Alzheimer's disease (see elaboration below), blurted out without basis in fact that Mr. Hurst was injured, and would not be starting the season. Based on this baseless assertion, Snickler shook off his selection of Hurst like a wet sheepdog, and everyone else avoided him like the plague until the twenty-fifth round.

Fortunately for the rest of us, while Big Guy was busy assembling the perfect staff, he selected the rest of his team as if he were golfing in the last round of the Masters: where the lowest score counts. I don't know about the rest of you, but I'd be damned embarrassed to have Mike Heath, Wally Backman, Chris Brown, Mike Easler and MK Young on my team.

Although at first blush the Tigers appear to be a lower division team, they may very well creep their way into the first flight, if Big Guy's pitching staff has the kind of year that it is capable of having. And, if the rest of the league owners/ managers gratuitously allow the Tigers to keep Robin Yount at shortstop. At this writing, however, such is doubtful.

#### 5. THE CARDINALS

Scouter and Yolk have selected a rather queer team this year. They have mixed some mainstay veterans, such as Murphy, Parker and Schmidt, with some up-and-coming superstars, such as Carter, Bell and Dunston. But after that it gets real ugly. Imagine if you will having a catching tandem of Fitzgerald & Bradley. Sounds like a sleezy law firm in the Bronx. Consider having the crackerjack duo of Sax & Oester at second base. Sounds like a kitchen utensil. And imagine having the pathetic pitching corps that the Cardinals have.

If things fall into place for the Cards, it is possible they could oust the Tigers from an upper division berth. Much of what happens from this point on depends on the supplemental draft. If Yolk is able to show up and participate in the proceedings, the Cardinals may even have a shot at second or third place this year. But if the old Scooter should show up for the supplemental without his knowledgeable partner, look for a tailspin down to sixth or seventh place. Sorry, Scooter. The Skipper won't be blinded by family loyalty.

#### 6. THE PIRATES

The front-runner for rookie manager of the year, Dennis may even have out-foxed a few veteran managers in this year's draft. Accordingly, to award Dennis for his draft guile and general sneakiness, he will hereafter be called the Fox.

The Fox certainly raised a few eyebrows with his opening trio of Fernandez, Hernandez and Ray, which coincidentally is also the name of the used car company in Tiajuana where Snickler bought his last car. After drawing a few chortles from his fellow managers, the Fox then settled in to select a very solid team, for a rookie. With a little luck and solid performances from his pitching staff, the Fox could very well finish ahead of the cocksure management of the Cardinals and Tigers. With an average year, the Pirates should easily outdistance that group of ragamuffins known as the Red Sox.

#### 7. THE RED SOX

With a moderate amount of sadness, the owners and managers of the 1987 Hot Stove League looked on pitifully as the Possum, league champion twice running, was stricken with a textbook case of Alzheimer's disease, and floundered his way to perhaps the strangest assembly of ballplayers known to mankind. The disease, diagnosed as so profound that I need not worry about discussing it here (since the Possum will not recall what he reads more than five minutes after laying his eyes upon it), is the only feasible explanation for a good many of the Possum's selections. After the Possum picked Wade Boggs in the first round, we all tittered about his error in taking Julio Franco in the second round. In the third round, Possum was back to his old self, taking Jack Morris. The buzzing in the crowd began as he followed up that pick with Von Hayes in the fourth. Something was obviously wrong with Possum. A pattern was emerging. Possum would make one decent selection, while in a state of sound mind, and, being overcome with the dreaded disease, follow it up with an inexplicable selection. How

else can one explain the Possum's selections of Frank White in the fifth round, Dan Pasqua in the tenth round, Tom Henke in the sixteenth round, and Charlie Hough in the twentieth?

Possum's draft might also be characterized as "Nightmare on 62nd Street: Freddie's back." That's right, gang, Possum has again selected that indomitable iron man, Freddie Lynn, to grace his outfield. Apparently Possum figures that after fifteen consecutive seasons of playing 100 games or less, Freddie is finally going to shake off those nagging little injuries and put together a solid year. Although it is very likely that the Possum will get his comeuppance this year, because of such questionable draft selections as Kelly "Syndrome" Downs (Possum claims he's in the Majors), team Narcolepsy could creep its way up to sixth or fifth, if all twenty four of Possum's "sleeper picks" have career years.

#### 8. THE BLUES

How very appropriate is Jon's nickname this year. These boys will be singing the blues long before October. Evidently, they don't distribute baseball literature in Kansas City, except for the Royal Baseball Yearbook. I can offer no other explanation for Jon's selection of Danny Jackson in the fourth round, Willie Wilson in the eighth round (although the Mike Heath cosmic ray explanation has some merit), and Steve Balboni in the first twenty-five rounds? Jon, come October, you will definitely have the Blues, brother. And appropriately, from this day forward you will be known as "Brother."

Brother looked like he had a pretty good draft going through the first six rounds, but then he went into a slump. Unfortunately for Brother, the quagmire kept him occupied for the remaining nineteen rounds. Of course, I can't say absolutely positively that Brother will finish this year in the league cellar -- but my uncertainty is akin to my inability to say unequivocally that Snickler will never be 6' 8" tall.

Perhaps Brother will be able to button up his chin strap and deliver a few blows at the supplemental draft. I don't think that there is much question that he will have first pick.

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Well, there you have it, my predictions for 1987. The league oracle having spoken, let me now show you the concensus prediction which has been arrived at by pooling each of your individual efforts. In arriving at the below figures, I have assigned a value of one for each predicted first-place finish, two for each predicted second-place finish, and so on. This is what we have predicted:

First Place:	Royals	16
Second Place:	Cubs	21
Third Place:	Braves	27
Fourth Place:	Cards	42
Fifth Place:	Sox	44
Sixth Place:	Tigers	48
Seventh Place:	Pirates	55
Eighth Place:	Blues	71

LEAGUE TRIP

Although we discussed a league trip to Chicago during this year's draft process, there has been some post-draft sentiment for another trip to Kansas City in August. I will check into teams, dates and accommodations for both places. Big Guy has also suggested that the trip be moved forward to the weekend of June 27-28 in Boston. Big Guy reports that he will be going to Boston that weekend for a legal seminar (in other words, Uncle Sam and the rest of us will be paying for his trip), and that the Yankees will be at Fenway for three games over the weekend. The old Skipper is planning on going to see this series, whether or not it is a league-sanctioned outing. Word has it that Possum and spouse will also be in Boston that weekend, brushing up on their snobby yuppie activities. I would like to have some response from the rest of you as to whether or not a league trip to Boston would be a possibility for that weekend.

1987 ENTRY FEES

To date, only Brother and Skipper have made their annual \$50 contribution to the league coffers. I would like to go ahead and open a bank account for the Hot Stove League sometime in the next thirty days, so we can begin garnering some interest. Please send me your entry fees as soon as possible, or risk having your league nickname replaced by "Cheapskate," or some similar sobriquet.

POINT TOTALS

With a little luck, and if my brother ever makes it over to U.B.'s to program his user-hostile computer, U.B. has magnanimously offered to crank out point totals on a bi-monthly basis. Although the league will not be able to officially sanction point totals coming from an uneducated, itinerant railroad worker, hopefully U.B.'s point totals will be a reasonable approximation of the actual figures. Look for a first set of point totals near the end of April.

EPILOGUE

In closing, let me wish each of you the best of luck in the 1987 season. Based on your initial rosters, you will all need it in order to compete with the Royals. Once again, Skipper invites you to forward your comments and criticisms to "From the Bullpen." Of course, I reserve the right of editorial license.

Play ball!

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