

FROM THE BULLPEN

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League Owners/Managers:

Now that the supplemental draft is behind us, we can all sit back and enjoy the inevitable collapse of the Tigers, and perhaps a few other pretenders to the throne. As we all know, Big Guy, the man who was born with a Cheshire cat smirk on his mug, went for nothing more than a quick fix at the supplemental draft, not unlike a desperate Crack addict. With his selections of such proven, year-in and year-out sparklers as Glenn Hubbub, Candy Maldonado, Vince "Tarpmaster" Coleman, and Kevin "Alka" Seitzer, rest assured that the Tigers are going to juggernaut their way to a seventh or eighth place finish, faster than Snickler heading for the men's room at Allied with his morning newspaper. Unfortunately for Big Guy, the Tigers will be staying at or near the bottom for the rest of the season.

Now for the Skipper's revised predictions and commentary, post-supplemental draft style (in predicted order of finish):

Royals

Having picked up the pitching plums of the supplemental draft, the Royals are poised to make their slow but steady climb to the top of the league, where they will be when the fat lady sings in October. Buoyed by a fleecing series of complicated trades with that putty-minded brother-in-law of mine, the Royals are definitely sitting in the catbird seat. With a refurbished pitching staff (which incidentally is making the vaunted and highly-drafted Tiger staff look like a nine-headed Ed Correa), a strengthened outfield, and two healthy catchers, the Royals definitely look like the Class of '87. We all know that the Carter boys will catch fire soon, and that Fernando will come around. In the words of world-renowned motivationalist "Zig Ziegler," we'll "see you at the top."

Braves

Kudos to Underbelly for his inspirational supplemental draft. In retrospect, I am sure that Underbelly wishes he had rolled his Porsche on his way up to Omaha for the supplemental draft, and had thereby been prevented from outsmarting himself by his overzealous overdrafting. U.B. got things off to a dandy start by taking that sure-gloved catcher from the Atlanta Braves with the movie-star good looks, Ozzie "Like A" Virgil. Perhaps I am mistaken, but it seems to me that every league owner has sworn on the Bible that the Oz Man will never deface their team roster again. I know I have made that commitment. But Underbelly likes clutch hitters like Oz, with his impressive 16 home runs and 27 RBIs.

Underbelly kept things moving at the supplemental draft by picking up Joe "Elbow Chips" Magrane, who will give Underbelly plenty of migraines this year.

Underbelly then surprised even himself by taking Juan "I'll Start One Game" Beranguer, after the old Skip planted the seed in the mind of the designated league hap. Finally, utilizing the Flintstone theorem of drafting, Underbelly took Steve "Bedrock" Bedrosian as his new fireman. Need I say more?

Yes, I have been a little hard on the Bravissimos' sophomore skipper, but deservedly so, given his pathetic supplemental draft. U.B.'s cavalier attitude toward the supplemental draft will catch up to him. He'll finish one step down on the victory platform.

Cardinals

Not unlike the Braves, the Cards also made some rather injudicious selections at the supplemental draft, and they're going to hurt. This team should finish in the upper division, but their chances for a title are about as good as Scooter's odds of stretching "Little Boy" out to 3½ inches. The Cards probably made an egregious error in picking up Terry Pendleton, a lifetime .210 hitter who decided to hit .350 for the first third of this season before coming apart at the seams.

The selection of Greg Swindell to replace Danny "Theory" Darwin also rightfully raised a few eyebrows. And the decision to pick up Mike "Darling of the D.L." Scioscia to shore up the Cardinal catching staff was certainly questionable.

Of course, I wouldn't be fulfilling my duty as League Scribe if I didn't mention again the brutal fleecings in my trades with the Scooter. While Joe Carter, Greg Walker and Company will soon be mopping up the league once again, Scooter will be able to take solace in the fact that Barry Bonds might not be as bad as we all thought. Too bad about his AIDS diagnosis, however.

Red Sox

The final upper division berth is a difficult one to predict. Solely out of deference to the Possum's two prior titles, I have placed the Red Sox in this slot. The Red Sox may be in first place right now, but the Possum's luck cannot last through October.

And speaking of blind-ass luck, can there be any other possible explanation in the world for Possum's present placement in the standings, aside from unmitigated, unadulterated good fortune? How else could anyone avoid the injury bugaboo as deftly as the league devil-child, our two-time reigning champ. In this charmed season of his, a day in the life of Possum must go something like this:

Possum awakes gently from a night of incessantly chanting Hail Marys in his sleep. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he reaches over to his bedstand and rubs his gargoyle-head lamp to start the day. Getting out of bed, Possum hops two steps on his right foot, then two on his left foot to his sock drawer, and pulls on his cloverleaf socks, left foot first, then right. Possum slips into his grandfather's lucky "Nehru" hand-me-down jacket, preparatory to another day at the office. After cinching up his

two-inch-wide white belt, with the buckle to the left, three notches in, he steps into his white, patent-leather penny loafers, gingerly slipping a shiny new dime into each.

After cramming his seventeen rabbit-foot charms into the pockets of his shirt, jacket and pants, Possum ties one more onto his rat-tail for good measure. He then reaches into his nightstand for his lucky amulet, given to him by his Great Aunt Edsonia, who won the 1932 Polish Million Dollar Lottery (\$1.00 per year for a million years). Possum makes his way towards the bedroom door, comforted in the thought that the morning box scores will bode well for him. Possum pauses at his bedroom door, slaps the horseshoe over the door three times, chanting a medieval verse known to bring good fortune, and heads towards the stairs. Possum continues to slap the numerous horseshoes hanging over the stairs as he makes his way down to the front door, smiling with the evil grin of a young Lucifer as he descends.

Possum reaches the front door of his house, opens it, and dives headfirst onto his lawn, which has been carefully seeded with nothing but four-leaf clover. After Possum rolls sideways across the clover lawn to the street, and back, he picks up the paper with his left hand, methodically transfers it to his right, passes it between his legs, and then forms it into a Captain's hat and places it on top of his head. Possum wears the newspaper into the house in his customary fashion. The neighbors think strange thoughts.

Possum wears his newspaper into the kitchen, unfolding it and laying it on the table with the headlines face down. He then darts into the pantry, and pulls out his economy-size box of Lucky Charms, filling his punch bowl to the brim. After covering his cereal with a gallon of milk, he begins consuming the breakfast of Lucky Champions.

A half hour later, after finishing up his Lucky Charms, Possum opens up the newspaper to the sports page, and eagerly turns to the day's box scores.

Casually noting that every other team but the Red Sox has between two to five players sitting out because of injuries, Possum yawns as he searches the boxes for the appearance of Red Soxers. Possum notes that he once again has sixteen healthy, robust players playing, each with at least five at-bats.

Possum further notes that he had two starting pitchers on the mound last night, both of whom won when their teams accumulated 18 runs. Both of his relievers picked up saves by pitching 1/3 of an inning. Possum then slowly folds up the sports page and heads to work, safe in the thought that each of his players will get 675 at-bats this year, and each pitcher will get 35 starts.

The point is, Possum, it simply can't last. To a man, we all agree that you picked a dismal squad at the outset, and followed that up with an equally poor supplemental draft. Nokes, Galarraga and Tabler may have added a quick burst of spirit to your team, but they will be hanging around the collective necks of the Red Sox like so many albatrosses come this October. Your time has come. The devil-child will get his due.

Cubs

"Hey, Bub, how 'bout them Cubs?"

Well, Snickler, I like you, and I feel bad about spoiling your cute little draft-position ploy while making you and Big Guy look like a pair of simps, but I simply cannot force myself to write the words, "You had a good supplemental draft." You didn't. You made the same critical error that Underbelly did on draft day -- you showed up and participated.

Snickler, oh Snickler, why did you take Charlie Hudson as the third overall supplemental pick in the draft? Just as sure as your hair is red, you should have known that Old Charlie would soon begin to fade, like your new 42" waist 501 jeans. Charlie will be damned lucky if he's not at the bottom of the Hudson, come year end.

Round Two: Zane Smith. Yeesh!

Round Three: Shane Rawley. Fortunately, Snickler, your little ears perked up when I mentioned I was thinking of taking Mr. Rawley. By benefit of your plagiarism, you have made one decent supplemental draft pick.

Snickler, you capped out your dreadful supplemental draft with a refugee from the Goonies, Ray Knight. If you wanted Ray so badly, why didn't you just tell all of us -- we would have given him to you outside of the draft just for laughs.

Snickler, although you apparently approached the supplemental draft the same way you tackle a draft beer -- go for the bottom -- you should be able to grope your way to a fifth place finish. God looks out for puppies and red-haired former Kearney superstars.

Pirates

Well, Mr. Fox, sending Underbelly to the supplemental draft to pick for you was like having the proverbial fox guard the henhouse. Underbelly, never before known to slit a good friend's throat, did a number on you. Of course, I may be giving Underbelly too much credit for assuming that he has intentionally foisted the miserable additions upon you, given the nice draft job he did for himself.

The Fox has got to be pleased with the way Underbelly fleshed out his crackerjack pitching staff with the addition of Don Carman, Dave Stewart and Rick Honeycutt. I'm sure that you can count on at least 15 wins between the three of them. Of course, you have to admire a guy who is willing to give a second chance to a player caught in a compromising position with a male transvestite prostitute. Perhaps there is something about the Fox that none of us know about.

The Pirates have also shored up a marginal outfield with the addition of Ken Phelps, who just perennially manages to get 320 at-bats. With Strawboo on the Dwight Gooden road to ruins, another outfielder can't hurt.

The Pirates' dismal supplemental draft should cement a finish in the bottom three of the league. However, the Fox should be able to steer his ship to a finish ahead of the barnacle-clad vessels of Big Guy and Brother.

Tigers

Enough has probably been said about the Tigers. They're going nowhere. But on second thought, I do have a few more comments.

It has been a pitiful sight to see the once-respected helmsman of the Tigers unknowingly blunder his way toward a bottom-of-the-league finish. Following his misguided and much-ridiculed theory about the value of pitching in the Hot Stove League, Big Guy wasted several valuable early picks in an attempt to fashion an unstoppable pitching force. You would think that over the course of three years of managing in this league, Big Guy would have figured out that you can't draft for pitching.

Enough said. Big Guy's quick-fix tactic in the supplemental draft will be back to haunt him. Since he has spent so little time at the top of the league standings in the last three years, it is understandable why he would want to make one last-gasp effort to do so. Unfortunately for Big Guy, it's too little, too late.

Blues

Sorry to have awakened you from that two-month coma when we called you for your first selection in the supplemental draft, Brother. Just kidding, Jon. You really bolstered your fine squad by those four fine selections in the supplemental draft. And I'm Victoria, Queen of Scots.

Actually, Paul Molitar would have been a good choice, were it not for his pre-season promise to himself that he would not overexert himself by playing in more than 70 games. Billy Hatcher may turn out to be a decent pick for you, but I doubt it. You really have shored up that fine pitching staff with the additions of Scott Bankhead and Eric Bell, neither of whom will be in contention for the Cy Young Award, but both of whom should probably still be playing in the Majors come September.

I hope you are sitting down for this, Brother. Your Blues will not finish in the money this year. Instead, your Blues will be locked in a grit-your-teeth Texas death match with the Tigers for the seventh place spot.

Prediction Summary

There you have it, the Skipper's revised predicted order of finish for 1987:

1. Royals
2. Braves
3. Cards
4. Red Sox

5. Cubs
6. Pirates
7. Tigers
8. Blues

At this writing, the league standings look like this:

1. Red Sox	5582.17
2. Braves	5501.83
3. Cardinals	5477.75
4. Royals	5293.42
5. Tigers	5240.00
6. Blues	5136.58
7. Pirates	5078.67
8. Cubs	5019.50

League Trip

Our Hot Stove League journey to Kansas City this year will be on August 15 and 16, to watch a pair of weekend games against Big Guy's hated Detroit Tigers. Presumably, we will follow last year's format, leaving Saturday morning in Scooter's mobile home, and returning Sunday night. Scooter has assured me that the sewage backup problem has been remedied for this year's trip. As Brother or I will be making hotel accommodations for this trip very shortly, please let me know before the end of the month if anyone does not plan to go. Of course, anyone not going on the trip will be verbally assaulted by the rest of us for the entire trip.

Closing Remarks

Responsive letters to From the Bullpen have been rather sparse this year. In fact, there have been none. I'm not sure if this means you all accept my opinions as gospel, or whether you are all afraid of being exposed by the Skipper for the intellectual vacuums that you are. So, I encourage Underbelly, Denny and Snickler to get out their crayolas and try to etch out a halfway-literate response to the Skipper. Big Guy, put your thinking cap on and put your secretary to work cranking out something humorous. Possum, put together some high-brow missive in collaboration with some of your Dartmouth friends, using your usual elongated words that will have Scooter running to his dictionary. And Scooter, I assume that you can hire someone to ink out a meaningful response to From the Bullpen for you.

There. The gauntlet has been passed. I will eagerly await your replies.

Skipper