

FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Publication of the
Hot Stove League
Eastern Nebraska Division
1987 Season

Final Issue
December 11, 1987

Fellow Skippers:

Let us all take a moment and tip our caps to the Big Guy in honor of his laudable accomplishment of dethroning the perennial league champion and resident pain-in-the-tail, Possum. The final tally for 1987, including post-season awards, is as follows:

Tigers	15,316.50
Royals	14,976.00
Braves	14,650.17
Pirates	14,560.67
Red Sox	14,516.08
Cardinals	14,311.08
Cubs	13,935.00
Blues	13,293.33

Enclosed for your offseason reading pleasure are Big Guy's 1987 Stat-Pack and a recalculation of the standings as if no trades had taken place this year. Also enclosed is an accounting of league entry fees, expenditures and disbursements. For those of you who finished in the money, checks are enclosed.

Now for a few comments about team finishes, in order of final ranking.

TIGERS

"He's in the money, he's in the money." Lord have mercy, Big Guy has finally pulled together a team capable of finishing in the money. Of course, the 1987 Tigers are a total aberration, and this team will surely drop back into mediocrity next year. But for the time-being, let's all be gracious and pretend like Big Guy really is a championship-calibre manager.

Big Guy is still waiting for Possum to get The Cup out of hock from the trophy shop where he took it last December to have it engraved. Apparently, Possum is having a little trouble scraping up the \$4.95 for the engraving charge, in the aftermath of the devastating market crash. Naturally, Big Guy is licking his chops in

anticipation of receiving the coveted Cup. After all, he has spent many a sleepless night pondering how The Cup will look on his fireplace mantel in his living room, right below his prized velvet tapestry of six dogs playing poker and smoking cigars.

Congrats.

ROYALS

What more can be said? Once again, the Skipper weaves together a praiseworthy assemblage of ballplayers, only to fall prey for the third straight year to a team full of players having career years and miracle comeback campaigns. I obviously can empathize with Tom Osborne, whose Huskers have frequently finished as bridesmaids to lesser but luckier teams with inferior but more fortuitous management. Better look out for the Skipper in 1988.

BRAVES

Three cheers for the Underbelly and his Braves, who posted a furious finish to end up in the money. This deserving fellow overcame his blue-collar tendencies and railroad-worker mentality to guide his Braves to a more than respectable third-place ranking. Of course, it took two post-season awards for the Bravellies to squeak past the surprising Pirates, managed by the Fox.

Many thanks to Underbelly for his endless hours of methodically punching in numbers on his glorified adding machine (Underbelly's new \$2,000 home computer has reportedly been resisting his efforts -- admittedly minimal -- to expand the scope of useage past mere number crunching, most of which could be done using a Korean \$1.98 hand calculator). Seriously, I know we have all appreciated receiving numbers on a weekly basis, rather than in the haphazard manner from seasons past. Underbelly, keep up the good work in 1988.

PIRATES

How 'bout them Pirates! The Fox has silenced his many doubters among the veteran league owners by craftily slipping his team past the fast-sliding Red Sox. The quiet, unassuming Fox has established himself as a force to be reckoned with in the league for years to come. Unlike certain other managers who shall remain nameless, who would incessantly pester their fellow managers with preposterous trade proposals, the Fox was content to just sit back and wait for others to phone him with trade offers. Once these offers were made, Fox would give them due consideration and respond. No bait-and-switch for this guy.

Fox, we applaud you for a fine finish to your rookie piloting season, and welcome you back for the 1988 campaign, which promises to be a real dog fight.

RED SOX

Poor old Possum. This once proud manager has been divorced from his perch atop the league standings, for good, many believe. Instead of honing his albeit-questionable drafting and management skills during last year's offseason, Possum elected to rest upon his laurels, and has a miserable fifth-place finish to go along with his two flukish pennants. The one-time top dog of the league has been defanged, his Wizard-of-Ozzish illusion of greatness shattered. As we can all plainly now see, the Emperor has no clothes.

Hopefully, this poignant demonstration of ruination via short-lived success and long-term excess will be a lesson to us all. Perhaps the Possum will be able to stuff his overweight hare back in his top hat, cram the playing cards back up his sleeve, straighten out his magic wand, and make the old Possum magic come to life again in 1988. However, this reporter will go on record as forecasting a second consecutive lower-division finish for the hapless has-been affectionately known as the Possum. Reasoning: Possum will be kept busy this offseason fending off homicidal investors such as Snickler and Underbelly, who were coaxed on or about October 18th to mortgage all of their worldly possessions and plunge head first into Possum's predicted bull market. See you in South America, Devilchild.

CARDINALS

Sorry, Scooter. Even the combined gray matter of you and the Yolk was not enough to forge a respectable finish this year. You may be proficient at a wholly luck-based game, such as your football forecasting league, but when it comes to judging talent (other than your selection of legal counsel), you come up short once again (not unlike the matter of certain of your anatomical shortcomings). Despite your free-wheeling dealing at the trade table, your Cardinals were only able to surpass the efforts of two other league factions, the Cubs and the Blues. That pretty well speaks for itself. Perhaps if you spend more time around the Skipper during the offseason, some of his baseball acumen will rub off on you.

Good luck in 1988. I fear that you will need it.

CUBS

Needless to say, Snickler was positively ecstatic at escaping a cellar finish by one spot for a second consecutive year. In fact, Snickler hasn't been so excited since finishing off his jazz-cap collection at his last trip to Wendy's. Look for Snickler to stay with his philosophy of picking washed-up free agents in 1988. Look also for Snickler to settle into the league bowels next year, absent further expansion of the league.

BLUES

Brother's Blues surprised no one by bringing up the league rear in 1987. His selection of Willie Wilson in the 8th round was a resounding harbinger of things to come. A couple of ill-advised trades sealed the fate of the Blues for this season. With another year under his belt, the 1988 campaign shows promise for Brother. Next year, expect Brother to hold off until maybe the 9th or even the 10th round to bring Willie Wilson on board.

See you in April, Brother.

EPILOGUE

The 1987 season was a memorable one, with the addition of two fine new managers, and the introduction of high tech to the league in the form of Underbelly's electronic abacus. Congrats again to those of us who finished in the money, and heartfelt condolences to those of you who did not. Hit the charts in the offseason, boys. 1988 will be another year, another buzzsaw of a contest for glory and respect among our peers in the league.

Dutifully yours,

Skipper