

FROM THE BULLPEN

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"I feel like the luckiest man alive." -- Lou Gehrig, 1938.

Dear Fellow Managers:

It is appropriate to start off this issue of From the Bullpen with the observation that the primary difference between Lou Gehrig and the Possum is that Lou only felt he was the luckiest man alive. Other than blind good fortune, how else can one explain the sudden spark in the play of Possum's supplemental draft picks. For example, Possum's third-round pick in the supplemental draft, Jeff Robinson, has essentially been a slug his entire career. No longer is that the case. Suddenly, blessed with a spot on Possum's roster, Mr. Robinson has back-to-back career best outings. Similarly, "Hindu" Henderson toiled in relative obscurity prior to the supplemental draft, chipping in a run here and an RBI there, but basically doing nothing fancy and not impressing very many people. Bingo, put him on the Possum's roster, and he has back to back four-hit, multiple run/RBI games. Yeah, right. A coincidence. No, my friends, Possum is not doing it with mirrors this year. He is doing it with four-leaf clovers, rabbits' feet and crossed appendages.

Although I have a few comments for all of the team owners, before I get to that I have a couple more comments about the Possum, the titular head of the Bridges' husband-wife management team. Previously unbeknownst to the rest of us, Possum has for at least the past year been serving strictly as the club figurehead for a Red Sox team piloted by de facto manager Tracy Bridges. This well-guarded secret first came to light when it was recently discovered that before Possum could effectuate any trade involving his team, or for that matter participate in any league function, he is compelled by marital servitude to contact the distaff member of his household for approval. Tracy then contacts her friend on the West Coast to find out if the stars are right and the moon is in the correct orbit for Possum to make any move involving the Red Sox. This revelation of course cleanly meshes with the fact of the uncanny good fortune enjoyed by the Red Sox over the course of the past two seasons.

The aforementioned report about the actual control of the fortunes of the Red Sox team (also known as the "Evil Empire") was buttressed by the Possum's professed inability to attend the league-sanctioned trip to Rosenblatt at the end of May to watch the Omaha Royals take on the Tidewater Tides. When Possum was asked why he would not be attending the afternoon game with his free-wheeling buddies, his response was that Tracy had planned a high-brow party for that same evening. My natural query was, of course, what does an evening party have to do with an afternoon ballgame? Emasculated, humiliated and embarrassed, Possum could not even offer up a flimsy explanation. Obviously, this flagrant gender-bender was going to be busy the afternoon of the game, knocking the wrinkles out of his pink chiffon party dress.

Now that I have all of that off my chest, just let me say that notwithstanding the Possum's incredible good luck, his blase' supplemental draft selections will go nowhere to help the Evil Empire recapture the league crown. While the gaping holes in the Possum's middle infield were evident to all other league participants, the Possum evidently wore his most restrictive blinders to the supplemental draft, because not a single infielder was taken by him. With Governor Browne back in the bush leagues where he belongs, and the septuagenarian Frank White crawling through his 32nd major league season; with the other Wizard of Oz (Guillen) barely batting his IQ, and "Linguine" Alfredo Griffin in a body cast; with Pedro Guerrero on the disabled list for the 17th time in his career and Pags back to his old habit of fielding ground balls with his face; it is obvious that Possum's "Gang of Five" will not be able to shoulder the monumental load of the rest of the team when the hot August sun begins to beat down on them. In short, Possum's team will fold up like beach chairs in a hurricane when the stretch drive begins. By September, the power behind the throne, Tracy Bridges, will be looking for a new manager for 1989, if not for a new roommate.

Now for a few comments about the rest of the boys.

Chiefs Chatter

Scooter obviously thinks that by merely changing the name of his team from the Lincoln Cardinals to the Lincoln Chiefs, he can avoid the dismal Hot Stove League finishes that have plagued his otherwise charmed life. Perhaps this will happen, but somehow I just can't see Scooter's name on The Cup at the end of the year. Sure, he's great at whipping out french fries and dreaming up ludicrous Runza commercials with smart-ass grandmas, but can he manage a baseball team? History says no, but with his impressive outfield and a completely refurbished pitching staff, maybe this will be Scooter's year. If it will help me get back into the family will, I wish Scooter the best of luck, and bite my tongue as I predict a first place finish for the Chiefs.

Incidentally, since the Chiefs have a new team nickname, it only makes sense that their owner/manager should have a new moniker for himself. Therefore, Scooter will from this point forward be known as Stick In Craw, which should be self-explanatory. (Second choice: Scooter's Jamaican nickname, Baby Trumpetfish).

Tiger Talk

Hard as it may be to believe, it appears that the Possum has been surpassed as the league's Sultan of Skulduggery, Master of Monkeyshines, Tycoon of Tomfoolery, and Shah of Shenanigans. For two years running, Big Guy has conspired with another league member to subvert the ethical underpinnings of the league by attempting to utilize the technical and incomprehensible league constitution and by-laws in his favor in the supplemental draft. We all recall the sleezy maneuver that Big Guy and Snickler tried to pull off last year, whereby Big Guy traded Bo Jackson to the Snickler to attempt to put Snickler in last place so as to secure the first supplemental draft pick. Obviously, Snickler is devoid of the requisite sneakiness to dream up such a ploy on his own part, not to mention a lack of mental firepower to conjure up such a scheme. This year, Big Guy has poisoned the malleable mind of neophyte manager Magpie, and convinced him to work up a deal to put Magpie in last place for the supplemental draft that has to rank with one of the foulest-smelling deals in league history.

Unfortunately for Big Guy and Magpie, their low-minded tactics nearly backfired on them, as Magpie's daughter reportedly came down with an 11th hour case of Lou Gehrig's disease (Magpie's excuse for not timely calling in the trade just kept getting better and better). However, even though Big Guy obviously attempted to utilize the picayune provisions of his self-serving by-laws to deep-six the rest of the league members, and nearly fell upon his own sword, the benevolent and god-fearing remainder of the league managers were willing to overlook the Magpie's clear default and allow the trade to pass muster for purposes of the supplemental draft. They are, and I am, to be applauded. I would like to think that next year this type of thing will not happen, but I know in my heart that Big Guy will come up with some new, executive proclamation to again try to make a mockery of our league.

We are still waiting for a report from Scotland Yard on its investigation into the questionable method by which Magpie transferred Rick Sutcliffe to the Tiger fold. This little indiscretion came to light when Mr. Sutcliffe was able to immediately jump back into the starting rotation and pitch a sparkling game, notwithstanding Magpie's bold-faced proclamations at the supplemental draft to the effect that Sutcliffe would never be able to raise his pitching arm above his waist again. Indictments may follow.

The happy ending to all of this monkey business by the Big Guy is that his team is on a genuine road to ruins. With Don Mattingly back on the beam for the Reds and Carney Lansford in the early stages of a career-threatening slump, one has to wonder if the thrill achieved by Big Guy in putting one over on the guys is worth a slide into the lower division. See you on the way down, Big Guy.

Pirate Points

I would like to spend as much time on my assessment of Captain Greybeard's supplemental draft as I have on the Possum's and Big Guy's, but it just wouldn't mesh with his quiet nature. Besides, if I'm too rough on him, I'm likely to be the victim of an axe murder at the hands of the Fox. It's always the quiet ones.

I can't say that Fox really helped himself much at the supplemental draft, trading off one slug Brewer ("Jumbo" Joey Meyer) for another (Rob "Oh" Deer). And Fox's pitching additions of Leary, Smiley and Jones will do about as much for him as Snickler's devout exercise regime has done for his physique, to-wit, nada. Nevertheless, with Fox's stellar opening day roster generally intact, I've got to believe that he is a good bet to finish in the money. I'm sure this would be a red-letter day for Fox, so he can finally quit his Grit newspaper route.

Blues Blasts

It's most unfortunate that you had to participate in the supplemental draft via telephone communication, Brother. Obviously, there was a crossing of the signals when you picked Chris Bosio and Marvelle Wynne in the supplemental draft. We can only assume that you erroneously understood Big Guy to be telling you that they were the last two living major league players available for drafting. Seriously, though, I look for Marvelous Marvelle to finally break into stardom after 14 years in the minors.

In all honesty, I do think that Brother has an outside chance at finishing in the upper division, if Mr. Bonilla continues with his lights-out year, and Andre "The Cat" Galarraga stays on his present tear. Keep up the good work, Brother.

Mudhen Medley

Although clearly shaken by the Magpie/Big Guy hose job, Jigger got off to a fine start in the supplemental draft with his selections of Cone and Eckersly. As the draft entered the third round, three years of jet lag must have finally caught up with Jigger. Jigger's selection of Roberto Alomar in the third round was less than impressive. As Stick In Craw so adroitly put it, "That's a terrible pick, Jigger." Jigger followed up that gem by picking up Storm Davis in the fourth round to replace Dennis Rasmussen. Rasmussen exhibited his disapproval over the move by promptly throwing a complete game victory for his new team, the Padres.

Jigger was no doubt thrilled to see that Wally Pipp, er, I mean Keith Hernandez, was recently put on the disabled list (I keep getting those two mixed up). Don't fret, Jigger, Hillbilly John Kruk will do a fine job of taking over for Keith at first base, unless he takes a leave of absence from the game to star in the sequel to Deliverance.

As this Bullpen is being dictated, I am looking over the revised roster of the Mudhens, frantically searching for good things to say about this team. I give up. The Mudhens are going nowhere fast this season. But, Jigger should be somewhat cheered by the knowledge that he will not have to move his good looking pheasant (stuffed by his taxidermist brother-in-law) off of his fireplace mantel to make room for The Cup this year.

Braves Bits

Underbelly can only be pleased with the fine showing made by the second overall pick of the supplemental draft, Greg Swindell. Exhibiting staunch determination to show that his 17-hit game was only a fluke, Swindell managed last Thursday night to surrender only 7 hits and 5 runs (in a flashy 2-1/3 inning performance). Don't worry though, Underbelly, I'm sure Swindell's last few nauseating performances have nothing to do with any physical infirmity on the part of Swindell. The iceberg that the Indians flew in from the Antarctic to keep Swindell inside until his next outing is probably only a conservative medical precaution.

You also needn't be concerned that in Kilgus' first post-supplemental draft outing, he got his tits lit up like Roman candles. I'm sure it's just some flaw in his delivery that all young and inexperienced pitchers tend to work out on their own over the course of a season. And look on the bright side: even though I wouldn't let Gene Larkin in my outhouse much less than in my outfield, at least you don't have to look at Mike Davis' ugly name in the Dodger line-up any more. There is another bright side to your supplemental draft, Underbelly. Although you didn't really need to pick up Fred McGriff at first base with Hrbek and Walker already on your squad, at least you managed to keep the Big Guy from filling the humongous hole he made for himself at first base. Sometimes it's more fun to do unto others than unto yourself.

Although it is obvious that Underbelly need not keep his calendar clear for the award ceremony this year, the good news is that he will have plenty of time in the second half of the season to work on his highly-profitable baseball card collection. I am sure that there will be a line of people stretching from Underbelly's house to the railroad depot waiting to give him a nickel for that Andres Thomas baseball card he so prudently snapped up for only 3¢, or a quarter for the George Bell card that he "stole" for 15¢. That is, unless the dealers decide to open up their warehouses full of cards to flood the market, as I have predicted. We all look forward to hearing about Underbelly's retirement from the railroad at age 35, after which he will no doubt live comfortably in a condo in Tempe on the sizeable nest egg he will have tucked away from his baseball card dealing profits.

Kub Kibbitzing

Woe be to Snickler. Prior to the supplemental draft he was running out of chubby little fingers to poke in the ever-increasing number of holes in his floundering Cub team. He sorely needed a top notch supplemental draft to put his team into possible contention for the first time in four years. Then, for some reason, be it that he was busy savoring his surprise second place finish in water basketball, concentrating on landing the biggest steak on Stick In Craw's grill, or simply limited by his own lack of raw intelligence, Snickler shot himself in both feet at the draft.

Snickler started things off by picking Kelly Gruber in the first round, not because he wanted Kelly Gruber, but because Magpie wanted Kelly Gruber in the next round. Good thinking. Then Snickler went with Mr. Candelaria in round two, an obvious quick fix which will turn into a flat tire when Candyman turns back to the gin bottle in another few weeks. Snickler capped things off by grabbing Farrell and Thomas, neither of whom inspired much commentary, good, bad or indifferent.

Snickler, The Cup will elude your clammy grasp once again this year. So sorry.

Reds Review

Well, Magpie, with all of the skulduggery and double-dealing engaged in by you and the Big Guy, the only question that remains to be answered is whether you will finish 500 points behind ninth place, or 700. Truly in the mold of one who has tangoed with the Big Guy in the conspiratorial process, you have outsmarted yourself and will have more than half a season in the cellar to dwell on that fact. After all that work, all that you really got out of the supplemental draft was Gregg Maddux, unless you seriously consider DeShaies, Buchele and Laudner to be major league quality ballplayers. If you do, you're a lonely man.

There are, however, still a few bright spots to look forward to, Magpie. After all, you have a shortstop (Sveum) who has his shoe size appear in the box scores on a frequent basis (EE). You have an aging former superstar at third base (Schmidt) who will entertain you by dumping a bucket of Gatorade on the field. And you have Al Leiter, who will no doubt go on to have a fine year at Columbus. And since you will not need to spend a lot of time looking at the box scores for the rest of the season, you will have plenty of time to tend to your gravely ill child. If I were you, I would scrap-heap this year, and start going to the books for next year's draft.

Royal Raves

I won't spend a lot of time patting myself on the back about this year's supplemental draft, since all I really managed to do at the draft was excrement all over myself. In the week-plus since the draft, Gerald Young has suddenly started missing games and has gone virtually hitless; Swift got his bell rung worse than Leon Spinks in his last fight; Tim Belcher (thanks for this hot tip, Underbelly) has taken over where Rick Honeycutt left off last year; and Ron Hassey has become part of God's shell game that he plays with my catchers. Every time I pick one, they seem to mysteriously disappear. Oh, well, I'm sure I'll be a contender with my leading catcher playing in 50 or 60 games.

In spite of myself, I still think that I have a crackerjack team that will be in the hunt come mid-September. Bob Walk has already won his 7 games, entitling me to a pot full of money from my side bet with the boisterous Jigger. Stieb is having a year for me, and Bob Welch has managed to lay off of the mouthwash and cologne bottles. Toss in my infield which is quickly heating up, and I'm in the fray to stay.

Conclusion

I hope that a few of you lily-livered married men are able to get kitchen passes for our league trip this year. Big Guy has suggested a renewal of our earlier plan to watch the Cardinals play at Wrigley on August 12-14. If I recall, the only conflict with this trip was because Stick In Craw had a

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golf tournament to go to. Or maybe that was the same weekend that Underbelly was scheduling his big baseball card show (sorry, dealers only). In any event, please check your calendars and see if you are available, and let me know if you will be going. Wrigley Field is a guaranteed good time.

Lastly, I am enclosing a revised roster of players, including all trades to date and supplemental draft picks. Also enclosed is a copy of the supplemental draft selections and cast-offs.

Keep those cards and letters coming.

Skipper

By supplementing his meager salesperson's income with money earned from posing for advertisements such as this, Jigger is able to afford a home next to a big shot lawyer like Skipper.

Tanned and rested after a week's vacation in Maine, and possibly down a few pounds, Snickler proposes another league meeting at Scooter's house (replete with free food and drinks) to discuss the possibility of raising his \$20 Runza award for the month of May to \$2,000.