

FROM THE BULLPEN

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Eastern Nebraska Division
1988 Season

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Greetings, Friends and Colleagues:

This abbreviated issue of From the Bullpen is to bring everybody up to date on trades, the league trip, etc.

Trading Frenzy

Predictably, the league is awash with player bartering, as paranoid and panicky league managers scramble to try to cement or improve upon their positions. Some teams, the Muds and Cubs come to mind, certainly have plenty of room for such improvement.

Enclosed is a revised player roster, including all trades made to date as this Bullpen goes to press. Some are obviously deserving of comment.

Picture if you will a young sheep, relaxing on a chaise lounge near a backyard swimming pool in a ritzy section of Lincoln, sporting designer sunglasses, sipping on a wine cooler, cool as a cucumber in the hot August sun. Why is this sheep able to beat the heat? Because 40 pounds of hot and cumbersome wool were recently sheared off of this young fellow. The identity of this domesticated mammal? Baby Trumpetfish (a/k/a Scooter, Stick-in-Craw). The shrewd manager who administered the fleecing? Your own Skipper. Of course we are talking about the Van Slyke/Bell/LaCoss for Gubicza/Bradley/Ramirez debacle. League wags are simply referring to it as "the Van Slyke incident."

League tenderfoot Jigger has incurred the wrath of every other manager in the league save one by violating the sacred, if unwritten, managerial axiom that one never trades with the league leader if said trade in any way helps the leader. Jigger has selfishly put himself ahead of the rest of the league, trading Scott Fletcher to the potentate Possum for Willie McGee and a handful of points. Since your hapless Muds are inexorably destined for last place, **WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?**

Not to be outdone by Jigger, Snickler made a whale of a deal with Magpie, Trammell/Horner/Hall for Elster/McReynolds/Marshall, which can only be described as lame-brained. What a deal for Magpie. He gets the league's best shortstop, and gives up the perennially-injured Marshall and a couple other slugs. Snickler picks up just enough points to keep Jigger at the bottom for another week.

I could go on and on about the trades that were made, but let's talk for a moment about the trades that weren't. Ever since I informed Possum that I would never make another trade with him, and later amended that to the effect that I would only trade with him if he would put his proposals in writing with a deadline for acceptance or rejection, Possum has proposed umpteen preposterous trades (which of course he will never make, once I nod my approval). Upon each laughable "baiting" by the Possum, I yawn and indicate my interest and tell him to put it in writing. I am expecting to receive the written proposal roughly in the same year that Snickler finally crawls back up into the upper division.

If Possum is the master of the bait-and-switch, then Magpie is the manager who cried wolf. Obviously a fervent disciple of the Possum's nauseating trade tactics (by the way, how does Possum the stockbroker ever make a decision on buying and selling stock?), Magpie has approached me about more trades than Snickler has rolls. Although I lost track at three or four, I think that Magpie proposed at least five or six or seven different trades to me in the span of three or four days. With each proposal, as soon as I promptly acknowledged my acquiescence, Magpie's eyes got as big as Big Guy's bar tab, as he recoiled in horror while backpedalling to hide behind Possum's pink skirt. After regaining his composure and mustering up enough courage to speak, Magpie would squeak out that he needed to "take a look at the points, but would get back to me." Magpie's idea of getting back to me meant uttering a sheepish "no" to the previous day's proposal (made by him), and a new proposal which would promptly be accepted by me and start the cycle all over again. The final straw was Magpie's offer to trade Eric Davis/Dale Sveum/Jim DeShaies for Phil Bradley/Raphie Ramirez/Tim Belcher. No sooner had Magpie made this proposal during a relaxing game of golf at Benson, than it was accepted by the Skipper without giving a thought to the exchange of points. Naturally, Magpie went into defibrillation at the thought of actually completing a deal, and informed me that he would let me know by the end of our round of golf if the trade could be consummated by him. At the end of our round of golf, Magpie indicated that he needed to go home and look at his points, but that he would call me yet that night and let me know. Although I waited by the phone until the wee hours of the morning, Magpie never called.

Obviously, I was concerned that his daughter was gravely ill again, with the same affliction that she came down with the night before our supplemental draft trade deadline. The following morning, I was relieved to find out that Magpie's daughter was okay, but that he simply did not have a chance to get back to me the prior evening. When asked if our deal was a deal, Magpie solemnly confessed to me that he felt he had to disclose that he had read in the paper that my other shortstop, Tony Fernandez, was perhaps going to be in need of surgery, and that I probably would not want to trade Ramirez with that knowledge. After thinking about Fernandez's condition all of one second and after thanking Magpie for his honorable conduct in disclosing Fernandez's physical condition, I informed Magpie that I wanted to go through with our deal nevertheless, and that I would call Underbelly and tell him to make the change on his computer. Trying to disguise his gasp, the floundering Magpie, true to form,

backed out of the deal. Not only does Magpie have nerves of jelly, he had the temerity to try to make it look like the old Skipper was backing out of the deal. My only comment for you, Magpie, is put it in writing.

Enough said about trades. As you all know, the trade deadline is August 31, 1988, which is fast approaching. As the deadline nears, the switchboards will be lighting up at Jigger's and Snickler's places of business, as low-minded managers attempt to pick the remaining flesh from the bone piles of these two miserable teams.

League Trip

The first league trip to Chicago is now set in stone. On August 13 and 14, those few of us with hair on our chests and fires in our bellies will watch the Cardinals and Cubs fight it out at beautiful and nostalgic Wrigley Field. At this writing, it appears that Jigger, Brother, Underbelly, Snickler and the Skipper will all be in attendance, with clear and unequivocal "noes" having been received from Baby Trumpetfish, Big Guy and Fox. The Possum is still buttering up the powers-that-be in the Bridges household to try to gain permission to exhibit his manhood for one weekend. But don't worry if you can't go, Possum. We'll bring you back a nice mesh blue Cubs hat to wear around the house with your lace pink panties.

Time to get this issue to press. Let me leave you with a little ditty that I dreamed up one night while restlessly cursing Possum's team in my sleep.

There once was a manager called Possum
Who thought his knowledge of baseball was awesome
Let's hear it again
That same old refrain
Possum picked a shit team, but it blossomed.

Yours truly,

Skipper