

FROM THE BULLPEN

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KUDOS TO ALL for a fun, festive, fabulous draft day. B.T. (Baby Trumpetfish) was definitely the people's choice, with his new Chiefs uniform and his ubiquitous good Runza food. Thanks to all of you from Lincoln for making it to our fair city for the draft, and special thanks to McBlunder for his appearance from Kansas City.

The 1989 draft shapes up to be the most balanced effort in memory. At the outset, each and every team seems to have a legitimate shot at a finish in the money, although Hospital Ward 6 (also known as the Blues) needs some minor medical miracles to have a chance.

Let's take a look at things from a Skipper's eye view:

Tigers

Hmmm. One has to scratch one's melon and ponder how the fat cat with the top draft spot picked this mediocre bunch. The Tiger infield and outfield look remarkably like the 1980 All-star team, which could play some kind of ball in 1980. But this is 1989, and nine more years haven't been kind to any of us, particularly WhiteSot's squad. Even if his pitching is bitching, WhiteSot will have to do more trading than a discount stock brokerage house (Bridges' Investment Counsel?) to parlay the Tigers into contention. Thank heavens for our new trade regulations.

Predicted finish: 6th.

Best pick: Phil Bradley (sure, now he gets hot)

Worst pick: R. Martinez (best AAA Hot Stover)

Red Sox

Want to know what chutzpah is? Possum picks Dave Parker in Round 25 (last year he was picked in Round 6, if you will recall). Parker, buoyed by his selection by the man that made Lou Gehrig a liar, hops off to his best start ever (76 points in week 1, top outfielder, third most points overall), and we find Possum whining and sniveling about how he almost took Von Hayes in the 25th

Round, instead of Parker. (For the uninformed, Hayes is off to a monster start, no doubt enraged at his snubbing by the entire Hot Stove League managerial coterie.) Hey, Possum, get on the phone and try to find someone else to whine at, these ears are tired.

I seem to say it every year, but I don't like the 1989 Red Sucks. An aging infield and an aching outfield (hurts to even look at this group) will make for a long season. Maybe pitching will make up for hitting, and maybe Possum can foist a few more unconscionable trades on his fellow pilots, but look for a serious standings plunge by the Sox.

Predicted finish: 5th

Best pick: Von Hayes, 25th Round (in Possum's mind)

Worst pick: Henerson, Jim Ed, Inky Dinky (3-way tie)

Chiefs

B.T. had the enviable third draft slot this year, and he done good. With the Sant brothers guarding the plate and Puckett/Burks/Jackson patrolling the outfield, this team looks solid everywhere but on the rubber (that's always been a problem for B.T., but that's another story). Take away Seitzer's hat trick (3 errors in one game) and he's out of the gate okay. Give Jay Buhner some playing time, and look out. If Teddy can get his back in shape and Eric puts on a Show, this team might be poised to snare the League jewel this year.

Predicted finish: 2nd

Best pick: Puckett (take note, WhiteSot and Possum)

Worst pick: Vince Coleman/Tommy Herr (volatile combination)

Pirates

I think the Bucks' manager had a good time at the draft, but he sure ticked off everybody else with his ceaseless chattering and boisterous braggadocio. Pipsqueak, pipe down for a second.

The old Pipster has picked another pretty fair team. Talk about a couple of first-sackers, how about Will Clark and Glenn Davis? Of course, these two dandies are nicely countered by the two anchors right across the diamond from them, Matt Williams and Vance Law. But all in all, the gregarious graybeard has done himself proud. Of course, you couldn't pay me to have Strawboo you-know- who on my roster, but some of us can live with that sort of thing.

Predicted finish: 4th

Best pick: Alan Anderson (looks like a flyer)

Worst pick: Mel Hall (in any round)

Reds

Looks like the Colossal Chatterbox has picked himself a winner this season. With Pedro, Brett, Ryne, Gaetti, Greenwell, Stewart and Swindell off to hot starts, this team may be hard to catch. While the nefarious Magpie may not be blessed with a lot of mental candlepower when it comes to most of life's functions, when it comes to picking baseball teams, some little light must click on in the deep recesses of his mind. That, or he (like WhiteSot) spent every billable moment of the six weeks preceding the draft pouring over every sports section and magazine printed in the English language.

Though he must overcome questionable pitching and some shaky backups, look for a finish in the big money from the man they call Magpie.

Predicted finish: 1st

Best pick: Brett Butler (the cat gets points)

Worst pick: Mike Marshall (has he ever played 140 games?)

Mudhens

Sniff. Whimper. Sob. Wah. This is all I heard last year and all that I'll hear this year from my insufferable potbellied neighbor to the north. What, he thinks he has the market cornered on injured players? Why, I could tell him a thing or two about injured players, and so could Possum. The bottom line, Sand Jigger, is how many points your team has cranked out, not how many limp-wristed hypochondriacs you foolishly drafted on your team full of gay caballeros.

Let's look at your team with just a titch of scrutiny: Catcher - old and weak; first base - injured and weak; second base - just plain weak; shortstop - ditto; third base - the blind pig found an acorn; outfield - a pretty sickly bunch; starting pitching - not bad but pitching is meaningless; relief pitching - ditto. Conclusion: weak outfit, coached by a sarcastic potbellied cynic who makes a living selling credit cards. Not a promising combination.

Interesting to note that Sand Jigger picked two of his favorite pitchers this year, Big Daddy and Charlie Huff-and-Puff. Wonder why Sand Jigger took the two FOBS (fat, old, balding, single). Perhaps they personify his own dream of being an athlete some day.

Predicted finish: behind (well) the Senators

Best pick: Kelly Gruber (like I said)

Worst pick: Entire middle infield (yuck)

Senators

No reason to toot Skipper's own horn, but obviously we have here another crackerjack pennant contender. Only decimating injuries or fraudulent trade practices could keep this blockbuster squad from a monetary reward at season's end, particularly with O'Quillen patrolling the infield for me. As Jim and Tammy Faye often have said, expect a miracle.

Predicted finish: 3rd

Best pick: Julio Franco (one of many)

Worst pick: Floyd Bannister (how do you piss away a 6 to 0 lead?)

Blues

Verse 1

Stretch McBlunder picked a team.
Me-oh-me-oh-my.
And on this team he picked some slugs.
Me-oh-me-oh-my.

With a Jack Morris here,
And Floyd Youmans there,
Here a walk, there a balk,
Every pitcher full of talk.

Stretch McBlunder picked a team.
Me-oh-me-oh-my.

Verse 2

Stretch McBlunder picked a team.
Me-oh-me-oh-my.
And on this team he chose some dogs.
Me-oh-me-oh-my.

With Gary Carter here,
And John Kruk there,
Another K, sit out a day,
No one here knows how to play.

Stretch McBlunder picked a team.
Me-oh-me-oh-my.

McBlunder, it's going to be a long year for you in the Hot Stove League. Hope you have some outside interests.

Predicted finish: 10th (bet the McBlunder farm on this)

Best pick: Dave Stieb (?)

Worst pick: Eight-way tie between Carter, Sabo, Downing, Samuel, Kruk, Morris, Ferrell and Youmans.

Cubs

Shamu's Chubbillies are off to a whale (pardon the pun) of a start in 6th place. This may be the earliest the Cubs have ever peaked for the year. It might be a few weeks, but eventually this team will nestle down into a cozy 8th or 9th spot, where Shamu seems to like it best. Until Tony Fernandez's injury, this team looked like it might have some potential. The injury put things back in the proper perspective. Life in the Hot Stove League just wouldn't be the same if Shamu was in the upper division. Sort of like the Clippers, the Saints, the Mariners and Kansas State: the Cubs belong down near the cellar.

Predicted finish: 9th

Best pick: Paul O'Neill (may be his year to blossom)

Worst pick: Tony Fernandez (injury-prone pussy)

Tribe

Looks like the uneducated railroad worker has proved once again that he cannot compete with the intellectual firepower that makes up the Hot Stove League management. Spellmaster has once again picked with his heart and not with his feeble mind. How else does one explain picking the likes of unseasoned greenhorns like Barryhill, Jeffries and Sheffield as starting players. How else does one understand the selection of breathtaking but underachiever Jack Clark as a starting 1st-sacker. How else does one explain the pitching selections of Zane Smith, Andy Hawkins and Dennis Martinez (well, those can't be explained).

Underbelly, we praise you for your sardonic wit; we envy you for your huge biceps and triceps; we thank you for your weekly point totals; but most of all, we jeer you and ridicule you for your selection of this bag of woofers that you call the Tribe. Maybe next year (O, that sweet refrain).

Predicted finish: 8th

Best pick: Mike Scott (you always have good pitching, Underbelly)

Worst pick: George Bell (Early Early Early)

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Enclosed for your use are initial draft rosters, as well as copies of the Official 1989 Hot Stove League Draft Record. Also enclosed are some copies of photos taken during the draft, and the first of the profiles on the enigmatic managers of the Hot Stove League.

Remember the supplemental draft slated for June 3, 1989 in Omaha. Keep your calendar clear for that day. Mark off also the weekend of July 21-23, for our hell-raising road show to Milwaukee and Chicago. Tentative plans are to fly into Chicago on the evening of Friday, July 21, drive to Milwaukee to see a ballgame on the 22nd (Saturday), return to Chicago Saturday night to invade Rush Street, and catch a Cubs-Giants game on Sunday, the 23rd. I am going to send away for tickets to these games presently, and if anyone knows that they cannot attend, please advise me accordingly.

Sand Jigger has promised retaliation to what he perceives to be unfair commentary in From the Bullpen. The Skipper, as you all know, has always been in favor of fair and impartial journalism, and invites letters and comments to From the Bullpen. Of course, in the interest of cost and space in future editions of From the Bullpen, the Skipper reserves the right to edit out insignificant portions of any letters received.

Keep reading those box scores.

Skipper