

FROM THE BULLPEN

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Hot Stove League
Eastern Nebraska Division
1990 Season

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Friends:

There are a few things I need to get off my chest right away, so let's get right to it, shall we?

McBlunder, let's face it. Your sad little team is destined for last place once again. I know that you were upset when I made this comment in the last From the Bullpen, and you were quick to point out after that issue the fact that the Blues were ahead of the Senators, but come on, we all know where the Blues will finish this year -- licking the League gutter once again. Just as sure as the sun comes up in the east; that President Bush will break his vow of no new taxes; that Snickler will card a 49 after shooting a 59; and that Possum will try to steal your cupboard bare once again this year -- just as sure as all these things, the Blues will wind up the 1990 campaign as the League doormat. Just why do you think that we ask you to be in the League each year?

Possum, quit your damn whining. It's too early for it. It's been incessant. None among us want to hear it. When you pick a brittle bag of sticks like an Eric Davis or a Paul Molitar, you can't expect them to turn into iron men overnight and play each and every game. You've made your own bed, so now lie in it, and lie quietly. And another thing, quit calling me on the phone every other day with your phony-baloney trade offers. If you have a deal that you want to make, put it on paper and send it to me. Sign it, have it notarized, and have three people in your office witness it. I will then have the business lawyers in my office take a look at your written offer to see if it is a legally binding proposal, and then and only then will I respond to it. Sorry, no exceptions. You may be able to bait-and-switch some of the other rummies in this League, but not the old Skipper. I know about your skullduggery and tomfoolery, and will brook it no longer. End of chapter, end of book.

WhiteSot, your theory about the value of pitching in this League has more holes in it than Shamu's sock drawer. You focused entirely on pitching during the Initial Draft, all but ignoring your outfield. Now, in the light of day, we see that your pitching staff is even weaker than your willpower for turning down barley, while your outfield is flourishing with a pack of has-beens and never-will-be's. For weeks, you've been shouting about how the Red Sox and Cubs are off to illusory starts which

cannot be maintained, since several players on those squads are out of the box like jackrabbits. My only response is that you might want to take stock of your own team, Mr. Objectivity, and think about whether Andre, Ivan and Hrbie can keep up their shotgun paces. The answer, of course, is no. Andre is off to a start which belies his advanced age (35) and the complete dearth of cartilage in his knees. Even on the natural grass at Wrigley, it's bone on bone. When the hot July sun begins to shine down on the right field at Wrigley, the Hawk will turn into a dove.

Look on the bright side, though, WhiteSot. You don't have any holes to fill at the Supplemental. Oops, I forgot about Orel's career-ending injury and that nagging little problem with Jay Buhner being in the minor leagues. Other than that, and the fact that your pitching point totals are even lower than Sandjigger's SAT scores, your team is in fine shape.

Speaking of Sandjigger, my goodness, does this boy ever have some problems! (I refer to his baseball team, not his dossier at Richard Young Memorial Hospital or the Eppley Treatment Center.) The 1990 Mudhens are as ugly as their team moniker suggests. While not yet in last place, the present standing of the Mudhens is artificially inflated by the blazing start of Ken Griffey, Jr., and the better-than-expected performances of Pena, Reynolds, Lansford and Coleman. Once these fellows start playing down to their capabilities, we'll see the Mudhens where they rightfully belong, and find out what sort of mettle their weisenheimer manager is made of. There'll be no joy in Mudville when the Mudhens come home to roost.

The season is nearing the end of its first quarter, and the surprising Chiefs remain in first place. Baby Trumpetfish credits his team's good start to clean living, presence of mind, and a good Catholic upbringing. Another factor he forgot to mention is his standing order that his wife and four children repeat an hour of rosaries each day to ensure the continued good health of the Chiefs' ballplayers.

While the Chiefs have occupied the top spot this year since Opening Day, when one examines B.T.'s roster with a bit of scrutiny, one realizes that this team is being carried by Chris Sabo, Rickie H., and "Sweet Music" Viola. This team seems to have more than its share of flat tires, and B.T. will no doubt be scrambling to find four suitable spares at the Supplemental Draft.

Speaking of which, the Supplemental Draft will take place at B.T.'s spacious digs in Lincoln on Sunday, June 10, 1990. Presently, the game plan is to get in a round of golf at Firethorn starting somewhere around the noon hour, with the Draft to commence in the late afternoon. Rumor has it that WhiteSot has already been dialed in to vacuum his basement that afternoon, so there should be plenty of openings for golf. Mark your calendars and get ready for a fiercely competitive Supplemental Draft. There are more gaps in the Hot Stove League rosters this year than in Sandjigger's date book.

Pipsqueak has been unusually quiet this year, even for him. Perhaps this is because the Pirates are currently in eighth place, only an eyelash from the cellar. While several commentators believe that the early-season performance of the Pirates is simply a blip on the chart and that the Pirates are destined for a high finish, League wags suggest that the self-annointed baseball oracle may have stumbled with

his pitching emphasis this year, and point to the agonizingly-low point totals of Saberhagen and Langston as the proof of the pudding. My own opinion is that Pipsqueak has pretty much kept his flytrap shut the last three years because he hasn't had much to sound off about. If the Pirates ever get up into the first or second position and start threatening to win some serious money, look for Pipsqueak to start talking plenty, and make Magpie look like Silent Orv.

Speaking of old Magpie, many of you probably didn't realize that he is of Indian descent, and that his Sioux birthname is Gums Yapping Plenty (GYP for short). Rumor has it that Magpie is a distant relative of Sitting Bull, which explains why with Magpie you get Sitting Bull, Standing Bull and Bull Over the Telephone. This man can talk. I understand that he is kept on a retainer by certain members of the Nebraska Legislature, just in case a filibuster breaks out and someone needs to take a breather.

In all fairness, Magpie has a good deal to talk about this year, and so he does. The Reds are looking pretty salty at this point in time, poised to overtake the top spot if the Chiefs should falter. Of course, everything isn't rosy for the Reds and there are a few soft spots which need to be firmed up at the Supplemental Draft. When your top pitchers are J. Martinez (J.??) and Bryn Smith, you know that you've got some shoring up to do with your staff. Magpie no doubt will be able to substantially beef up his moundsmen at the Supplemental Draft, assuming that his daughter doesn't come down with another untimely case of polio or the bubonic plague. Once again, we wish her the best, Magpie.

And how are the Senators doing, you query? Very nicely, and thanks for asking. See you at the awards ceremony.

And now last, but certainly not least (except in terms of pate cover), let's have a short heart-to-heart chat about Underbelly. I don't mean about his team, since we could all care less about the harmless Trieb. No, the Trieb is going nowhere again this year, and even if it was in danger of an upper division finish, we have more important things to talk about in this issue.

Enclosed for each of you is a copy of an article recently published in the Lincoln Star, that crackerjack, award-winning newspaper of the Star City. For those of you who haven't heard about this little misadventure, evidently one of the managers from Underbully's other baseball league contacted a reporter from the Lincoln Star newspaper, and suggested an article about our beloved Underbilly and his basement baseball operation. Now you've got the story, and here are a few observations which I have about it.

Interested readers will note first of all that Underbelle's surname has been spelled three different ways in the article: (1) "Hurlbut," which I have for years assumed, perhaps mistakenly, is the correct spelling; (2) "Hurlbert"; and (3) "Hurlburt." Of course, the first question that comes to mind is: was this a screw-up on the part of the Star reporter, or did Masterspieler strike again? Those of us in the Hot Stove League certainly have our own opinions on this.

My next observation has to do with the quote which apparently was given to the reporter by Underbertie, to-wit: "I make six figures a year, but this is the most important thing in my life." First of all, to satisfy your curiosity, that's not my quote. I make seven figures a year, and those seven figures are the most important thing in my life.

The quote could be from Shamu, if the six figures are meant to refer to Shamu's annual salary of \$9,615.22. However, I rather doubt that the quote came from Shamu, since the most important thing in his life is his six-figure annual intake of ballpark brats. I also doubt that the quote came from Sandjigger, (though I am given to understand that he is well into six figures) since the most important thing in his life is getting a snootful of the loudmouth soup and popping off about his most recent sales conquest. No wonder they call this man Willie Lomans.

At least Underboiler is accurate. You will note in the article that he is quoted as saying that the R. P. Myres' league in Lincoln has seven attorney participants. It is my understanding that the R. P. Myres' league has one itinerant railroad worker, a printer/typesetter, a tavern owner, a city sewer works maintenance employee, two plasma donors, a night supervisor at the "O" Street 7-11 store, an Amway distributor, and a Baskin-Robbins parking lot attendant. On the other hand, the Hot Stove League in Omaha counts among its member participants six, not seven, attorneys. I guess it is this kind of attention to detail that has made the railroad industry virtually accident-free over the past few years.

How about that picture of Underberry? Funny, I have been in his basement 50 times, and have never seen his baseball hat collection and books neatly stacked against the wall behind him. And I don't think any of us are surprised that Underbenny is wearing a skypiece for the picture. In his own words, "There's no need to let 200,000 newspaper subscribers know that I'm as bald as a cue ball." But overall, not a bad picture. However, I'd like to see the 49 other snapshots that the photographer took before he found one that was suitable for an article of this magnitude.

How about some of those other quotes? "The box scores in the paper are the perfect breakfast condiment -- coffee, eggs, bacon and boxes." "The box scores are a beveled mirror of what happens on the field They are a barometer on how your day will go." "My team is my favorite team They gotta produce or they're out." Did Underbucky stay up nights thinking about what sagacious saying to deliver to the reporter? Did he hire a public relations firm to put together a couple of nifty cliches for him? Or did he reel them off the top of his head in rapid-fire rhetoric as he would have the readers mistakenly believe?

At least Wonderbelly was kind enough to share some credit with his fellow owners/managers in the Hot Stove League, including the League founders, WhiteSot, Possum, Shamu and Skipper. Notice how each of our names are sprinkled throughout the column to give us appropriate recognition for our efforts. Notice also the many references to the official League rag, From the Bullpen. Hey, don't worry about me, Bob, I've only spent a couple hundred billable hours putting together the Bullpen issues, and incurred untold personal expense to supply the League newsletter to the hungry League

participants. No need for the old Skipper to have a little pat on the back and a little recognition for his efforts.

You will note that Underberbie benevolently shared the limelight with my brother, Dan, who invested perhaps 200 hours in devising the present point-keeping system so that Underboobie has time to devote to giving interviews and achieving local notoriety. Underboozy was generous enough to mention the unidentified computer programmer, a "friend of Hurlbut's in Dallas," who has made this whole operation a complete snap for Mr. Headline Hog.

I guess those are all my comments on the Lincoln Star article. Nice going, Underbillie. Anything for a story, eh? If any of the rest of you have any comments which you feel like sharing concerning Underbelchy's venture into the fine art of self-promotion, the Hot Line is open.

SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT

As mentioned, the Supplemental Draft will take place the afternoon of Sunday, June 10, 1990, in Lincoln at Baby Trumpetfish's place. If you will not be available to be present in person at the Draft, please make arrangements to be available via the telephone so that you may participate in this year's Supplemental Draft.

H.S.L. SCORING SYSTEM - ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Kudos and high praise to USA Today, my brother Dan, and Underbelly for their fine efforts to provide us with the equivalent of space age technology in the Hot Stove League scoring system. Now, instead of Underbelly laboring for hours on end inputting the hundreds of statistics from USA Today every Tuesday and Wednesday, he is able to input the numbers almost instantaneously with a confident flick of his computer keyboard. Then, the points are neatly printed out in rapid-fire manner on the point total sheets, thanks to some ingenious computer programming work by the computer savant of the Ernst family.

And that's not all, folks. Instead of all League participants not receiving point totals until Friday, Saturday and (gasp) sometimes even on the following Monday, as has been the case in the past, Underbelly now has the resources available to immediately fax the point totals to Possum on Tuesday morning. What a deal! Possum actually receives on Tuesday faxed point totals which include games played only a day or two before. What a difference from years past! The only rub is, the rest of us still don't receive the points until Friday, Saturday, or even Monday, because there is an insidious black hole located at 8401 West Dodge Road, Omaha, Nebraska, previously unknown to our nation's scientists. While Possum is able to receive the faxed points by Tuesday morning, for reasons not yet

known to the scientific community, the point totals get caught in a web of cosmic limbo at Possum's office, and are not fully distributed until after the passage of several days. Some League members have theorized that this is the same black hole which has enveloped all of Possum's legitimate trade proposals in the past. Others speculate that it is not a black hole at all, but rather a problem of Possum inadvertently mixing the point totals in with his six-foot stacks of meaningless investment rags, and the other miscellaneous paperwork which completely covers his office and from time-to-time sends chills up the spines of B.I.C. investors.

Another thought which comes to mind is that Possum simply doesn't think that other League members are interested in receiving the point totals in an expeditious fashion. Plausible enough, given Possum's inconceivable notions about other matters affecting this League, and in particular, trade negotiations. For the record, Possum, we are all quite interested in receiving our point totals as soon as they come off the wire from Underbelly.

The game plan which I propose is for Possum to receive the direct faxes from Underbelly for the rest of the month of May, and then to immediately fax the points to Sandjigger, McBlunder, WhiteSot/Magpie and me. For the month of June, Underbelly should fax the points directly to me, and I will then distribute them. July will be WhiteSot's month. August will be the responsibility of Magpie. September will be handled by Sandjigger. If this makes sense to everyone, so be it. The following are the relevant fax numbers:

Possum:	397-8617
Skipper:	397-4853
Magpie & WhiteSot:	348-1111
Sandjigger:	399-7025
McBlunder:	(913) 371-5726

Once again, many thanks to those responsible for our advancement into the 20th century.

Oh, and not to be forgotten, several of you probably have not heard of Underbelly's ingenious cost-savings plan of using the Kinko's Copy Service fax machine to deliver the first week's point totals. Drawing upon his endless reservoir of knowledge of union efficiency tactics and cost-cutting measures, Underbelly felt that he could realize a substantial cost savings by faxing the point summaries from Kinko's Copy Center, rather than incurring postage costs of \$2.25 per week. Having failed to negotiate a cost figure with the savvy Kinko's fax supervisor, however, Underbelly was less than pleased when he was unceremoniously tagged with the first fax billing of \$50. Of course, rather than inquiring with the Kinko's people about the possibility of a decimal placement error in his billing, Underbelly quickly dashed off his personal check for the amount of the invoice, and personally absorbed this stinging judgmental blunder. This sort of acute cost containment practice has managed to keep the Burlington Northern locked into an endless position of unprofitability and government subsidation. Good work, Underbelly.

LEAGUE TRIP

As we speak, plans for the league trip to Arlington, Texas, are being finalized. Presumably, each of you has received McBlunder's letter seeking payment of air fare of \$92 for the round-trip flight from Kansas City to Dallas. It is my understanding that Underbelly, Shamu, Magpie, Sandjigger, McBlunder and I will be making the trip from Kansas City to Dallas via airplane. Baby Trumpetfish will be driving down with his family to meet up with us on game day. The three League members who are alarmingly short on testosterone, Possum, WhiteSot and Pipsqueak, will not be making the trip this year. Of course, they each say it is by personal choice, and not as a result of a spousal mandate. Sure.

We will be attending baseball games on Thursday evening, July 5, Friday evening, July 6, and Saturday, the 7th. We will see the Rangers play both the Orioles and the Red Sox. Reportedly, Baby Trumpetfish has made reservations for all of us at the luxurious and serene Super 8 motel right off of the freeway exchange. Govern yourselves accordingly in terms of the amount of spending money to bring on the trip. As a guiding polestar, you should know that Shamu has budgeted \$50 for this year's trip, exclusive of air fare. Thus, you should plan to take an amount of money in a multiple of 8 to 10 times of Shamu's budgeted figure, if past League trips are any indication.

CLOSING

Well, that's about it. It's been pretty quiet out there this year so far, except for a few rumblings from my bombastic neighbor to the north. Perhaps things will heat up after the Supplemental, after which we will doubtless each be contacted on a daily basis by Possum, instead of his now-weekly consults, for more trade gibberish.

Enough said.

Unflaggingly yours,

The Skipper