

FROM THE BULLPEN

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Hot Stove League
Eastern Nebraska Division
1990 Season

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Dear Fellow Owners/Managers:

A funny thing about being on top: Everybody's always taking unwarranted potshots at you. Give us some examples, you ask. All right, a few cases in point: George Steinbrenner, Saddam Hussein, Skipper, 2Live Crew, Jimmy Buffett, Zamfir, etc. The list could go on and on.

I find it interesting that now that the cream is rising to the top and the Senators appear certain to finish in the money this year, the teams of the two individuals with the chutzpah to challenge From the Bullpen and its editor are firmly lodged in the bowels of the League standings. If either of their teams had a whisker of a chance to finish even in proximity to the Senators, I could understand their authorship of the cute little Rod Serling article and the trite issue of the JiggerNaut. But they don't, so what gives?

Quite frankly, I enjoyed the literary efforts of both Sandjigger and Underbelly. While plainly not up to the lofty standards of From the Bullpen, they were nevertheless clever, and obviously the product of a good deal of thinking and the expenditure of a vast amount of personal time. But then, these two characters have a considerable amount of disposable time on their hands. A hectic week for Underbelly consists of frantically looking for a fourth for a game of pitch at work, running off the baseball league stats and speeding over to B.T.'s fax machine on Tuesday afternoon, and monitoring his sizable investment portfolio (100 shares of virtually worthless Bridges Investment Fund stock and 15 or 16 dog-eared baseball cards). And as for Sandjigger, since his promotion to vice president in charge of customer glad-handing and flesh-pressing, he's had enough time to convert the MacIntosh personal computer purchased from me (at only a slight markup) into an \$1800 address book and Nintendo machine. Not to mention the fact that he owns George, Paul and Ringo in Challenger Yahtzee.

While we're on the subject of my expansive (waistline) and receding (hairline) neighbor to the north, I thought you might all be interested in a glimpse at a typical workday for the bombastic credit card peddler:

7:30 a.m.	Awakes with a pounding hangover from previous evening's schmoozing with prospective clients
7:40 a.m.	Consumes six Tylenol and one-half bottle of Listerine (80 proof) to soften up spike through head
8:00 a.m.	Consumes health-nut breakfast of three Slim Jims, half a bag of Doritos,

and remaining half bottle of lukewarm Rolling Rock

8:15 a.m. Showers, shaves (forehead and back) and frets about clump of hair in shower drain

8:25 a.m. Dons butterscotch leisure suit while finishing off Listerine

8:25 a.m. Logs in on computer for quick game of Yahtzee with Ringo

8:30 a.m. Hops into PMBMW and listens to motivational sales tape by Clarence "Zig" Zigler: How to Win Friends, Influence People and Make Sales by Pressing Flesh, Telling Jokes and Slapping Backs

8:40 a.m. Arrives at work and tells receptionist and secretary how beautiful they look this morning

8:45 a.m. Walks by boss' office for first time, wishes him a good morning, tells him he looks like he's lost weight

8:50-9:00 a.m. Drinks coffee (Irish) and reads box scores to see how the flacid Mudhens are doing

9:05 a.m. Walks by boss' office a second time and tells him he loves his new suit

9:10 a.m. Begins calling on prospective customers; tells them that whatever they are buying, F.D.R. is selling

9:25 a.m. Walks by boss' office a third time and remarks about great-looking family in photo on boss' desk

9:30-10:00 a.m. Updates information in \$1800 address book

10:05 a.m. Walks by boss' office and offers to get him a fresh cup of coffee

10:10-10:25 a.m. Intensive sales strategy and brown-nosing session with boss

10:25-10:45 a.m. Generalized schmoozing and butt-kissing of secretary and other office staff members

10:45-1:15 p.m. Four-martini lunch with prospective client at Chez Freddie's

1:30 p.m. Returns to office and assures boss of likely new client, comments on how hard boss seems to be working these days

2:00 p.m. Tee-off time at country club with prospective clients

2:01 p.m. First of many purchases from beer cart

4:10 p.m. Makes turn with a 69

6:15 p.m. Alcohol content now up to usual level, cards a 41 on the back 9

6:30-8:30 p.m. Cocktails at the 19th Hole

8:30-11:30 p.m. Cocktails at the Holiday Bar and Arthur's

11:30-1:00 a.m. Cocktails and ballet at Last Chance Saloon

1:20 a.m. Arrives home, admires and pets pheasant on mantel

1:25-1:50 a.m. Whips up on Ringo at Challenger Yahtzee

2:00 a.m. Slumps into bed, fully-clad from waist up, otherwise in birthday suit

4:15 a.m. Awakens and updates \$1800 address book with name of dancer from Last Chance Saloon

4:30 a.m. Pets pheasant on mantel

7:30 a.m. Awakes with pounding hangover and begins cycle anew

It's a Pennant Race!

Current Standings:

(August 7, 1990)

2.	Reds	9161
3.	Senators	8961
4.	Tigers	8849
5.	Red Sox	8845
6.	Pirates	8762
7.	Cubs	8744
8.	Blues	8565
9.	Mudhens	8516
10.	Tribe	8346*

The old Skipper (not "Skippy") cannot remember a tighter pennant race from top to bottom at this stage of the campaign. Other than the Blues, the Tribe and the Mudhens, it appears that everyone has a realistic shot at the pennant, or at least third-place money. For comparison's sake, let's take a look at how the standings stood at about this point in time in other years, and the final finishes for those years:

1987

Standings on August 9-10			Final Standings		
1.	Red Sox	10,638	1.	Tigers	15,316
2.	Tigers	10,523	2.	Royals	14,976
3.	Royals	10,505	3.	Braves	14,650
4.	Braves	10,452	4.	Pirates	14,561
5.	Cardinals	10,205	5.	Red Sox	14,516
6.	Pirates	10,069	6.	Cardinals	14,311
7.	Cubs	10,011	7.	Cubs	13,935
8.	Blues	9,180	8.	Blues	13,293

* Due to a computer glitch that Underbelly has not yet worked out, the Tribe last week had both a starter and a reliever named Bill Gullickson, which threw the scoring for the Tribe off a bit. In reality, the Tribe is in ninth place, and the Mudhens, despite their best week of the year, remain mired in the cellar.

1988

Standings on August 10			Final Standing		
1.	Red Sox	10,282	1.	Tigers	14,438
2.	Tigers	9,791	2.	Red Sox	14,271
3.	Pirates	9,742	3.	Pirates	13,875
4.	Reds	9,740	4.	Chiefs	13,816
5.	Chiefs	9,738	5.	Reds	13,502
6.	Royals	9,374	6.	Mudhens	13,244
7.	Cubs	9,247	7.	Royals	13,069
8.	Mudhens	9,139	8.	Blues	13,005
9.	Blues	9,132	9.	Cubs	12,853
10.	Braves	9,015	10.	Braves	12,755

1989

Standings on August 2			Final Standings		
1.	Tribe	9,022	1.	Tigers	13,435
2.	Reds	8,903	2.	Red Sox	13,427
3.	Red Sox	8,858	3.	Reds	13,249
4.	Pirates	8,728	4.	Tribe	13,153
5.	Tigers	8,698	5.	Pirates	13,091
6.	Mudhens	8,484	6.	Chiefs	12,814
7.	Chiefs	8,365	7.	Mudhens	12,636
8.	Cubs	8,296	8.	Senators	12,456
9.	Senators	8,198	9.	Cubs	12,187
10.	Blues	6,821	10.	Blues	10,924

As you can see, the trend seems to be that the Tigers flourish at year-end, while the Red Sox, with the exception of last year, tend to fold up like so many cheap lawn chairs. The Blues and the Cubs tend to snuggle up next to each other near the cellar, whatever the time of year. What will 1990 bring? Probably more of the same. The Tigers seem to be heating up at crunch time once again, and the Red Sox, despite all of Possum's trade shenanigans, appear to be nothing more than a carefully crafted house of cards.

Enclosures

Enclosed for your enjoyment and edification you will find a summary of the final League

standings from 1985 to 1989, together with an updated League roster.

Trade Winds

As expected, because of the August 1 restriction date for player trades, the last week of July brought with it a whirlwind of trade negotiations and swap talk, predominantly from the mouth of our resident carnival barker, Possum. My prediction in the last issue of From the Bullpen that Possum would be busy trying to pry loose a player or two from the weak-of-mind proved to be prescient. It didn't take a crystal ball to forecast that the Possum Trade Hotline would be buzzing with intimidating trade proposals from our own version of Saddam Hussein to those perennial fleeces, McBlunder, Underbelly and Shamu. Fortunately for us, Possum was only able to bludgeon trades out of McBlunder and Underbelly, and was unable to consummate a transaction with the girthsome one at Allied. Whether this was because Shamu's boss has cut off all fax communications at the office and limited Shamu's personal phone calls to two per year, or because Shamu had wised up to the wily ways of the Possum after five years, is subject to debate. Probably the former.

I found it interesting that Possum chose not to pick on the League cellar-dweller, Sandjigger, in his eleventh-hour trade negotiations. At first, giving my northerly neighbor the benefit of the doubt, I assumed it was because Possum felt that he had met his mental match in trying to put together a deal with a cagey salesman like Sandjigger. Then, upon further reflection, I realized that Possum avoided trying to make a trade with Sandjigger for another reason: The Mudhens' roster is as barren as a Chernoble grocery store shelf. If you got nothin' to trade, ain't nobody gonna trade with you.

I understand that Bridges Investment Fund is planning to raise its fee for administering the Fund for its shareholders. Not because they've produced any minor miracles in investing our money, but to try to absorb some of Possum's long-distance telephone expense while he is on the road schmoozing with clients. Well-placed sources report that on Monday, July 30, and Tuesday, July 31, with the trade deadline approaching, Possum placed at least 20 phone calls from the city of Los Angeles and the Denver airport, in an attempt to fashion a trade with McBlunder, Underbelly, WhiteSot and B.T. The fruits of these yeoman efforts were a relatively meaningless trade with McBlunder (Ted Higuera and Mike Scioscia for Jack Armstrong and Terry Steinbach, net 39 points to Possum), and a more meaningful trade with the apathetic cheefton of the Tribe, Underbeely (Chili Davis, Tom Browning and Delino DeShields for Tony Gwynn, Mike Moore and Jose Oquendo, net 27 points to Possum, 37 points to Underbelly). While the rest of us were resolved to make Possum ride out the rest of the year with the putrid outfield of Chili Davis, Pete Incaviglia and Jim Eisenreich, Underbelly arguably gave up the League's best outfielder (Tony Gwynn) for a quick 37 points and a couple of miserable also-runs. Good long-range planning, Underbelly. You should be on the advisory council at Bridges Investment Fund.

As for you, McBlunder, although you swore to B.T. and others that you would make no further trades this year, you shamefully buckled to the pressures of the unctuous Possum, pressures that you should have expected and been prepared to deal with. Just because Possum called you at home late at night on eight consecutive evenings, and hounded you and hounded you and hounded you and hounded you, you should not have given in. You should have continued to resist him. His pledge to wreak financial havoc upon you by mishandling your investment in the Fund was moot -- he is already mishandling the Fund. His threat of mayhem towards your spouse and minor child would probably

never have been acted upon. Like a seasoned prize fighter, Possum jabbed and jabbed and punched and poked and scratched and clawed at you for fourteen rounds, and then wore you out. You threw up your hands, muttered "No mas," and caved in to Possum's brutal pestering tactics. But we understand, McBlunder. We have all been there. Had Possum been a member of the Gestapo in WWII, we might all be speaking German and saluting Hitler each morning and night.

Fortunately, because McBlunder's bones had already pretty much been picked clean, there wasn't much meat for Possum to go after. If Jack Armstrong is able to lead the Red Sox to another championship, then we need to pay the Devil his due. Possum will have earned his title. McBlunder, your many apologies are accepted, and we hope that your deep-seated feelings of guilt for trading with the Possum are on the wane, but not until the September 1 last-ditch trade deadline has come and gone. We trust that you have learned your lesson: Trading with Possum is trading with the Devil.

Just for laughs, let's take a look at how the traded players have done since they were swapped:

Possum's New Players

Tony Gwynn	+139
Jose Oquendo	+46
Mike Moore	-26.6
Jack Armstrong	+1.7
Terry Steinbach	+45

Stretch's New Players

Mike Scioscia	+80
Ted Higuera	+14.5

Underbelly's New Playors

Tom Browning	+14.2
Chili Davis	Has not played
Delino DeShields	+93

Nice going, Underbelly. With Gwynn on the Red Sox squad, Possum now has a legitimate shot at another title. You have broken the conspiracy and turned on your comrades. We will not forget this.

Miscellaneous

Continued thanks to Underbelly for his prompt transmission of point totals to League members. After a smooth month of June, (when point summaries were disseminated from my office), there seems to be another black hole developing in the system. Although Underbelly assures us that the point totals are being promptly faxed to WhiteSot and Magpie's office on Tuesday afternoons, I have been lucky to get them by Wednesday. I have heard similar complaints from Possum and Sandjigger, and McBlunder has gone several weeks without receiving any point totals at all. Funny, I seem to recall

WhiteSot and Magpie moaning as loudly as anyone about the inefficiencies of the system during the month of May when Possum was in charge of receiving and distributing the points. Either Magpie and WhiteSot are asleep at the switch, or Kermit is keeping too watchful an eye on the fax machine. Let's clean up your act, boys, or when your tour of duty has passed, you can expect to receive your points by carrier pigeon ten to twelve days after publication.

This coming weekend, August 18 and 19, Underbelly, Sandjigger, McBlunder and I will take a second summer baseball trip, this time to Chicago to watch the Cubs take on the always-fierce Braves. This trip will not coincide with an Ernst family reunion, and will be made sans Cheryl. I mention this only to stem the tide of disparaging and unfair comments concerning my control or alleged lack thereof over my personal freedoms. The fact that I will be up at dawn with the vacuum cleaner the morning of our trip establishes exactly nothing.

Closing

That's about enough for now. Sandjigger, keep those JiggerNauts coming. Underbelly, give me your best stuff. I can take it. I'm in control here.

See you all at the stag. Until then, I remain,

Irrevocably yours,

Skipper
(not Skippy, damnit)

HOT STOVE LEAGUE - RECORD OF FINAL FINISHES

1985

1.	Red Sox	16,764
2.	Cubs	16,610
3.	Royals	15,854
4.	Tigers	15,732
5.	Giants	14,951

1986

1.	Red Sox	15,369
2.	Royals	14,974
3.	Tigers	14,777
4.	Cardinals	14,187
5.	Cubs	14,018
6.	Braves	13,813

1987

1.	Tigers	15,316
2.	Royals	14,976
3.	Braves	14,650
4.	Pirates	14,561
5.	Red Sox	14,516
6.	Cardinals	14,311
7.	Cubs	13,935
8.	Blues	13,293

1988

1.	Tigers	14,438
2.	Red Sox	14,271
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7.	Royals	13,069
8.	Blues	13,005
9.	Cubs	12,853
10.	Braves	12,755

1989

1.	Tigers	13,435
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2.	Red Sox	13,427
3.	Reds	13,249
4.	Tribe	13,153
5.	Pirates	13,091
6.	Chiefs	12,814
7.	Mudhens	12,636
8.	Senators	12,456
9.	Cubs	12,187
10.	Blues	10,924

Summary

		<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>
Red Sox	(Possum)	1	1	5	2	2
Cubs	(Shamu)	2	5	7	9	9
Senators/Royals	(Skipper)	3	2	2	7	8
Tigers	(WhiteSot)	4	3	1	1	1
Chiefs/Cards/Giants	(B.T.)	5	4	6	4	6
Tribe/Braves	(Underbelly)	-	6	3	10	4
Pirates	(Pipsqueak)	-	-	4	3	5
Blues	(McBlunder)	-	-	8	8	10
Reds	(Magpie)	-	-	-	5	3
Mudhens	(Sandjigger)	-	-	-	6	7