

FROM THE BULLPEN

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Eastern Nebraska Division
1990 Season

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"This is their finest hour."

Winston Churchill, December 12, 1942
Skipper, September 11, 1990

Fellow Owners/Managers:

Ah, it's good to be back. We had a terrific honeymoon trip to Europe, Cheryl thinks I'm the greatest, and the SENATORS are in FIRST PLACE. How could life be any sweeter? The only circumstance that comes to mind is one that finds the hated Tigers, the loathsome Red Sox and the hapless Mudhens locked in a three-way tie for the Hot Stove League cellar. Now that would bring tears of joy to the old Skipper's eyes.

During my tour of duty in Europe, I obviously was unable to keep up entirely with the hubbub of the Hot Stove League and the fortunes of the fateful Senators. Thank goodness for the international edition of USA Today and the fax machine at our hotel in Switzerland. Upon our return, I was gratified to find the Senators a mere 40 points out of first, and poised to assume a spot atop the leader board. But I was not pleased to learn that Possum had forged yet another trade in his iron-willed resolve to finish in the money this year. Fortunately, it appears as if the mighty Possum may have stubbed his snout on this trade.

When I called my clamorous neighbor to the north from Kennedy Airport on the way home, for an update on the League happenings, no sooner had I posed the question than Sandjigger greeted me with the sickening words "Possum made another trade." Immediately, my mind raced to thoughts of the plump one in Lincoln with the coiffure of red, and what trade misery might have been visited upon him at the hands of the ruthless and unctuous stockbroker. Breathlessly, I envisioned a revitalized Red Sox pitching staff with Bob Welch and the Rocket in the starting rotation, and Bobbie Thigpen in the bullpen; I saw Kelly Gruber making a nifty play at third base for the Red Sox, and George Bell cranking out one home run after another in his Red Sox uniform. In my spine-chilling vision, I saw a befuddled Shamu staring at his updated Cubs roster full of lifetime .210 hitters and other Red Sox cast-offs. At his feet, I saw a pile of red wool clippings, reaching almost to his knees. There stood Shamu, expertly fleeced from head to toe by Possum the Persistent, the League shearsmith, the only remaining cloak of

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dignity being Shamu's coveted All Saints coaching shirt and his white nursing shorts. My stomach ached.

My terrifying daydream was interrupted by a voice at the other end of the phone line: "He traded with Scott." Startled, I asked Sandjigger to repeat himself. "Possum's trade was with Baby Trumpetfish," Sandjigger said.

As my heart rate dropped back down to a non-emergency level and the color came back to my face, I inquired of Sandjigger as to the particulars of the Possum/Baby Trumpetfish trade. When I learned that the Master of the Trade gave up the red-hot Eddie Murray to the parsimonious Baby Trumpetfish in exchange for the likes of Jay Bell and Brett Butler, not only was I relieved, I was pleased. In an effort to feed his insatiable desire to make that one last trade, to delight in the Art of the Deal, it appears that Possum has assured himself of a finish out of the money, if not in the lower division. In his ardor to turn the trick one more time, he forgot the golden rule of trading in the Hot Stove League: Don't Trade Just To Be Trading.

All that having been said, Possum remains within a stone's throw of third place, and a hot September for Will Clark could change things dramatically. One week after the trade, Possum is still ahead of the game 178.5 points by making the trade. B.T. is up by 151.5. Let's see what happens down the road.

Down the Stretch

With about three weeks to go, it's still anybody's baby. Right now, it looks like the championship will boil down to the post-season awards. With Cess Fielder hitting more home runs than the whole Ham Fighter squad, it appears as if Magpie will have 150 points in the bank for the American League MVP. Other than that, anything could happen. As the Skipper has analyzed the situation, Bob Welch is the leading candidate for the AL Cy Young Award. But, if Bobbie goes back on the sauce and drinks his way into October, it looks like Thigpen, Clemens and Stewart are the leading pretenders to the throne, probably in that order.

Over in the National League, just to make sure and jinx myself and the chances of the Senators, it looks like Doug Drabek is the front runner for the Cy. However, not to be counted out of the race are Sweet Music, Juaquin Martinez of the Tigers' fine staff (or whatever his damned first name is), and Neal Heaton of the Chiefs. (Just kidding, Scott. Nice pick, though.) In the MVP race, it looks like Barry Bonilla probably has the inside track, although Barry Bonds is not far off the pace, and the Straw Man probably has a shot if the Mets creep back into first place.

With Cess and Bonilla both on his roster, the Reds seem assured of having at least one MVP award, and probably two. Those 300 points should go a long way towards elevating the Reds and their

stoic manager to the championship of the only League that ever really mattered. As we make our way through the final weeks of the season, on behalf of the Senators, good luck to Magpie and Baby Trumpetfish, and may the best team (mine) win.

Enclosures

Enclosed for your amusement, information, edification, and use are a revised League roster and some photographs.

Miscellaneous Notes

My goodness, what happened to those poor Cubs? Pity poor Shamu, who seems destined for yet another finish in the bowels of the League. All he ever wanted was a little respect. Is that so much to ask?

A cursory review of the point totals for this year indicates that the Cubs total for this week of 260 points (ugh!) is likely the lowest weekly total for any team this year, except for the incomplete week after the All Star break. In fact, 260 points for the entire week may be the lowest point total ever in the Hot Stove League. Take a look at how Shamu's crackerjack squadron did on an individual basis this past week:

Tettleton	19
Borders	4
Galarraga	46
Joyner	0
Doran	16
Herr	38
Gagne	11
Weiss	0
Gruber	31
Worthington	35
Coleman	20
Bell	7
White	41
Davis	23
Leonard	27
Barfield	41
Clemens	-3

Harnisch	-11
Welch	32
Bielecki	15
DeShaies	15
Valenzuela	-28
Cook	2
Lefferts	12
Thigpen	22

As usual, Shamu has picked a group of lion-hearted competitors who turn it up a notch at the end of the year, when the hot September sun forces down the batting averages and ups the ERA's of lesser men. Curiously, the present Cub pack is predominantly the same team as the Cub unit that scored 703 points the week of May 22-29 of this year, followed by a 490-point outburst that elevated the Cubs to the zenith of their existence, a first-place standing on June 5, 1990. (It's true, take a look for yourself if you don't believe me.) The beginning of the end for the Cubs seems to have been the Supplemental Draft, which saw Shamu pick up Pat Borders at catcher, Wally Joyner at first base, and Ken Howell on the mound, via a number of saavy draft selections and trade maneuvers. After the Supplemental Draft, the Cubs immediately dropped from first place to third, having picked up only 142 points, whereas the Reds picked up 522 points, the Mudhens 412 points, the Senators 384 points, the Blues 363 points, and the Chiefs 332.

The Cubs rebounded with a total of 714 points the week of June 12, 1990. On that date, the Cubs were firmly positioned in second place, a mere 100 points behind the first-place Reds. Also on that date, basking in the splendor of the moment, an energized Shamu boldly proclaimed that the Cubs were "sure to finish in the money." In my memory, the idiocracy of this statement has been exceeded only by the now-silly proclamation of Sandjigger earlier this year, "No matter what else happens to the Mudhens this year, they will finish ahead of the Senators." Umm-hmm.

After his pompous statement on June 12, Shamu's Cubs began their rapid descent to the League cellar. The plunge was so rapid, the Shamu craft was unable to maintain any cabin pressure. Take a look:

June 19	543	Third place
June 26	569	Third place
July 3	508	Third place
July 10	314*	Third place
July 17	228**	Sixth place
July 24	442	Fifth place
July 31	539	Sixth place
August 7	559	Seventh place
August 14	467	Seventh place

August 21	482	Sixth place
August 28	361*	Eighth place
September 4	415**	Ninth place
September 11	260*	Tenth place

* Lowest point total of any team for the week.

** Second lowest point total of any team for the week.

I think it's time that you face up to the facts, Shamu. You will never win this League as long as there are other breathing participants. Accept it, and enjoy it for what it is worth. Remember, you always have your scratch golf game (or is it sniff) to fall back on.

Standings Update

In case there is any confusion, the Senators are still in first place. They may not be next week, next year, or ever again, but for now they're on top and looking down at the rest of you. Buck up and pay your respects, Sandjigger.

Closing

Thanks from Cheryl and me to all of you who helped us celebrate our wedded bliss on August 24. I'm sorry that Magpie and Pipsqueak couldn't make it. I understand that yet another family emergency kept Magpie away (he had to give his pet schnauzer a flea bath), and that Pipsqueak intentionally stayed away because of rumors that Possum had trading on his mind. Good decision.

That's all for now. Keep the faith and keep rooting for the Senators.

Skipper

Shamu Through the Eyes of Possum

I made a new friend in Switzerland. Oddly enough, he calls himself "Svenjigger."

My new friend, Svenjigger, was quite pleased with his new mantelpiece.

Packy frets as he searches for his all-purpose Polo cologne/aftershave/ anti-perspirant/jock-itch spray.

"Thanks anyway, Skip, but I'm stuffed. Well, maybe just one little bite."

McBlunder glares at Cheryl at the baseball game in Texas, unable to hide his disgust at this female invasion into the sacred rites of the League.

"Waah! Uncle Shamu ate all my macaroni and cheese!"