

FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Publication of
The Hot Stove League
Eastern Nebraska Division
1991 Season

Edition No. 17
September 7, 1991

"I love my life." --Spiderbelly.

"Life stinks. I am master of my ship no more." --Sandjigger.

Paisanos:

Ah, life! This seemed to be the underlying theme of the 1991 Hot Stove League Annual Baseball Trip. Trip participants now know two things for sure: (1) Spiderbelly (a/k/a Underbelly) absolutely, positively, irrefutably, undeniably loves his life, primarily when his brain and neuro system are saturated with alcohol; and (2) Skipjack (a/k/a Sandjigger) will never make another League trip, now that Ann is taking over his entire life (just ask Spiderbelly).

In a nutshell, the baseball trip was grrrrreat! For you lily-livered yes-men who did not make it on the trip, tough luck. The six trip attendees voted unanimously to deduct 250 points from the year-end totals of each team whose manager did not participate in the League outing. Next year the penalty will be 500 points, so start building up your marital capital now for next year.

This year's stouthearted trip participants saw two terrific ballgames at beautiful new Comiskey Park, highlighted by two home runs by Frank Thomas and a single dinger by Pudge Fisk. The beer was icy cold, the beer cups bottomless. The Bratworsts were hot and spicy, the peanuts salty. The blue collar crowd from south Chicago was, to say the least, enthusiastic. What a trip! Among the trip highlights:

-A scenic boat ride through downtown Chicago's sewage canals.

- Watching Pipsqueak miraculously recover from a near coma in the second inning, to doggedly attempt to rescue a troubled young woman from a life in the convent.

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- The running of the Emus at Pamplona.
- U-Belly's chiding "Master-of-the-Ship" diatribe to Skipjack.
- The flexibility of our rental car (at \$5 a mile).
- U-Belly's solo mating dance to the sultry sounds of the reggae band.
- Pipsqueak's call for the immediate ouster of the Possum from the Hot Stove League (which received an immediate, unanimous affirmation).
- McBlunder's face turning the color of the sidewalk when he realized he had missed his flight home.
- U-Belly's shameless solicitation of legal business for Skipper during late-night train ride.
- The intense chagrin felt by each of us when we realized that we had to spend another night in Chicago, talking baseball, playing cards and drinking beer.
- Watching the look of stark terror on Underbelly's face as we moved from one group of seats to another in the Comiskey outfield, as he received one death tap on the shoulder after another.
- The look of ecstasy on the face of Shamu-Gone-Bad as the waiter loaded up my extra pork chops and Skipjack's extra chicken wings in his doggie bag.
- My establishment of a personal record of curing my hiccoughs nine times in the same evening.
- The silent assassin's boozy recount of Magpie's fraudulent misrepresentations concerning Doc Gooden.
- **Just being part of U-Belly's love affair with life.**

Next year, Detroit/Toronto! Don't miss it!

And now for this week's standings:

	<u>Last Week</u>	<u>This Week</u>
Reds	(11160)	11696
Tigers	(10722)	11395
Cubs	(10709)	11252
Red Sox	(10080)	10684
Blues	(10179)	10680
Tribe	(10015)	10524
Chiefs	(9997)	10466
Pirates	(9732)	10349
Senators	(9768)	10348
Skipjacks	(9553)	10088

Here come the Tigers! With 300 points to make up and only four weeks left in the season, can they do it? The answer is yes! Particularly with a little boost from some certain post-season awards (Bonds, Fielder, Gant, Clemens?). Believe you me, it will be a long winter if we have to see WhiteSot's name on the Cup for the fourth time in seven years. Say it ain't so.

Now let's take a look at this weeks' top tens:

Hitters

1.	Frank Thomas	(Red Sox)	1281
2.	Paul Molitor	(Cubs)	1236
3.	Rubin Sierra	(Cubs)	1210
4.	Raphael Palmeiro	(Blues)	1169
5.	Cecil Fielder	(Tigers)	1161
6.	Barry Bonds	(Tigers)	1151
7.	Cal Ripken	(Reds)	1140
8.	Jose Canseco	(Chiefs)	1134
9.	Will Clark	(Reds)	1122
10.	Devon White	(Reds)	1116

What happened to those star Senators, Sandberg and Joyner? Thanks for reminding me. Wally had a whopping 20 points last week, and Rhino had 33. I used to love life too, U-Belly.

Pitchers

1.	Tom Glavine	(Senators)	544.8
2.	Roger Clemens	(Tigers)	529.6
3.	Lee Smith	(Senators)	514.1
4.	Jack McDowell	(Pirates)	497.6
5.	Dennis Martinez	(Tigers)	493.6
6.	Ramon Martinez	(Chiefs)	475.6
7.	Dennis Eckersley	(Reds)	468.0
8.	Rick Aguilera	(Blues)	461.6
9.	Brian Harvey	(Red Sox)	445.5
10.	Mike Henneman	(Chiefs)	433.0

U-Belly still has hopes of cracking one of these 2 top ten lists this year.

From Our "Where Did He Come From?" Department

Here is a list of a few guys who are having much better years than any of us expected:

Devon White	(Reds)	1116
Juan Gonzales	(Reds)	1035
Pete Harnisch	(Reds)	359.2
(now we can see why Magpie is in first)		
Mickey Tettleton	(Tigers)	943
Travis Fryman	(Tigers)	835
Harold Reynolds	(Cubs)	935
Harold Baines	(Cubs)	968
Ozzie Smith	(Cubs)	973
Frank Thomas	(Red Sox)	1281
Lou Whitaker	(Red Sox)	930
Chili Davis	(Red Sox)	1044
Dave Winfield	(Red Sox)	895
Greg Vaughn	(Red Sox)	890
Brian Harvey	(Red Sox)	445.5
Tom Candiotti	(Red Sox)	386.7
Edgar Martinez	(Blues)	863
Jim Abbott	(Blues)	407.6
Rick Aguilera	(Blues)	461.6
Scott Erickson	(Blues)	420.1
Louis Polonia	(Chiefs)	991

Tony Phillips	(Chiefs)	969
Felix Jose	(Pirates)	963
Brian McRae	(Pirates)	938
Terry Pendleton	(Pirates)	955
Jack McDowell	(Pirates)	497.6
Dave Henderson	(Mudhens)	1049
Juan Navarro	(Mudhens)	320.2

Flat Tires

This is my list of players who have not quite lived up to their billing or draft position:

Kevin Mitchell	(Mudhens)	702	
Bob Welch	(Mudhens)	271.1	
Tim Wallach	(Senators)	745	
Ellis Burks	(Senators)	793	(indubitably)
Tom Brunansky	(Senators)	750	
Jeff King	(Senators)	223	
Willie McGee	(Pirates)	729	
Eric Hanson	(Pirates)	202.7	
Tony Fernandez	(Chiefs)	787	
Gary Sheffield	(Chiefs)	302	
Sandy Alomar	(Blues)	196	
Frank Viola	(Blues)	263.6	
Mark McGwire	(Cubs)	803	
Kevin Seitzer	(Tigers)	391	
Darryl Strawberry	(Reds)	890	

Food for Thought: A New Scoring System?

Fueled by my injury-plagued summer of discontent, much discussion has taken place lately about changing our scoring system in the Hot Stove League for next year, to lessen the now-devastating effect of injuries to star players and starters. For months, WhiteSot has been advocating a change to the Bill James Fantasy League system, which allows a manager to make daily changes in his starting rosters, with points awarded on a prospective, rather than retrospective, basis. While I am philosophically opposed to adopting anything that WhiteSot is so fervently in favor of, as the Core Six discussed in Chicago, perhaps a system somewhere between our present system and the Bill James Fantasy League would enhance our enjoyment of the League.

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If our software designer (Brother Dan) is able to accommodate us, there seems to be real interest in changing the League format to allow more *flexibility* (Shamu will like this) in managing our respective teams, particularly with respect to trades with others. Some of the features of this proposed new system, as ruminated upon by the Core Six, are as follows:

- Each manager will select a 30-player roster at the initial draft before the start of the season. Each roster will be initially composed of a specified number of players at each position, and a specified number of pitchers and relief pitchers, but only at the time of the opening draft. After draft day, each manager is allowed to realign his team (through trades or subsequent draft selections) in any manner that he wishes, as long as he has at least one player to start at each position, and a specified number of starting pitchers and relief pitchers.
- Team points will be calculated on a weekly basis, but based only upon starting players and pitchers. Prior to opening day, each manager will select his starting lineup and his starting pitchers and relief pitchers, and furnish this information to our master statistician, Spielmeister. At the end of the first week, or whenever the statistics are first available from USA Today, U-Belly will calculate the points for the week based only upon the starting players on each team. Other players on each team's roster who are not designated as starters will not receive points for the team for that week.
- Every week, if desired, a manager may make a managerial change, and place a new player in the starting lineup. This will be done by contacting U-Belly by a designated weekly deadline date, for instance, by Sunday night at 10:00 p.m. These new selections may be left on U-Belly's answering machine if he is not available. If we want, we can charge managers a fee for each transaction, similar to the Bill James league.
- If a new starting player has been selected by a team manager, when the following week's point totals come

out, they will provide only the incremental point totals for the past week, and so a new starting player's *past* performance will have no effect on a team's points. Each week, when the point totals are distributed, the point total sheets will provide the past week's point totals for all *starting* players, and the accumulated point totals for the *team* at each position. At the end of the year, if we wish, we can have U-Belly print out totals for the entire year for each player on a team's entire roster, so that we can use this information in drafting players for the following year.

- After the initial draft, each manager will be able to draft five additional players from the undrafted pool of major leaguers. There will be no discards from the roster. At the end of the year, each team will have 35 players on its roster, unless it has traded for an uneven number of players with another manager.
- The selection of the additional five players will be on a first-come, first-served basis. For example, if a Todd Poppel is not drafted in the initial draft because he is expected to start in the minor leagues, but a major league team brings him up after two weeks of the season, the first person to get a message on U-Belly's answering machine is entitled to have Todd on his roster. The five supplemental picks may be made at *any* time during the season, whether it be on the date of the opening draft or on September 1 when the major league has its deadline for call-ups from the minor leagues.
- Trading is *wide open*, but still subject to scrutiny of any late-season fire sales. Any manager may trade any player to any other manager, regardless of position, points, or places on the roster. For example, one manager may trade five outfielders for another manager's one superstar pitcher. All that is required is that each manager have at least one player at each of the starting everyday positions, and let's say five starting pitchers and two relievers. Presumably, because we have all been in the League for a number of years, we all understand who the honorable traders are (U-Belly, WhiteSot, Pipsqueak, etc.), as well as the

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sleezeball con artists (i.e., Possum), and because we draft at the opening draft in the same order as the finish from the previous year, late-season fire sales should not be a problem. If this assumption is incorrect, and Possum pulls off some greasy September deal whereby he picks off three or four studs from the roster of an apathetic last-place Tribe team (only by way of example, U-Belly), a pre-appointed trade committee can apply the standard smell test and decide to veto the transaction upon a two-thirds vote.

- If we wish, we can require managers to select outfielders based upon whether they are ordinarily starting in left field, center or right, and pitchers on the basis of whether they are left-handers or righties. The options are unlimited. We have much flexibility, Shamu.

Give all of this some thought over the next month or so. It seems that the above system, or one similar to it, will take much of the sting out of injuries to star players, and will provide each of us with more hands-on managerial opportunities and decisions. Now that we are all several years into this League and no longer neophytes, I think we are ready for advancement to a more sophisticated League system. Of course, a few of you who have just now caught on to the old system (Shamu and McEmu) may have some reservations.

And speaking of reservations, I had a few about the plane flight home from Chicago, but unfortunately Sandjigger didn't. Don't stop me now, I'm on a roll.

Okay. I've said enough. Think about a new scoring system, think about next year's trip and the penal sanction for missing it, and most of all, think about Underbelly's love affair with life. It's a heartwarming story.

Yours in the true brotherhood of baseball,

Skipper

P.S. How did the Mudhens become the Skipjacks? Good question. See the enclosure. Is it because their manager is an upstart, a beetle now flat on its back, or because he is a fish? Tough call.

Shamu greets the White Sox fans as he pulls into
Comiskey Park on the 1991 League Trip.