



FROM THE BULLPEN

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TENTH ANNUAL DRAFT

Kudos, congratulations, bravissimo, nicely done. Pat yourselves on the backs, fellas, for a job well done. With little doubt, the 10th Annual Hot Stove League Draft will best be remembered for the remarkable level of preparedness exhibited by the 12 participants, the intense focus displayed during the entire 25 rounds of the draft, and the obvious parity of the selected teams from top to bottom. And the fact that McBlunder personally quaffed a small ox cart of Miller Genuine Draft.

Last Friday night's draft was assuredly an exciting and tension-filled event, and only a League participant can understand the anxiety involved in preparing for and participating in this holy event. One slip of the tongue, one innocent blunderous selection, and one may count on being sliced to ribbons by the razor-sharp tongues of Itchie, Underbelly and the rest of the HSL gang. Now, that's pressure.

SKIPPER'S PICKS AND PANS

While we devoted considerable post-draft time collectively analyzing and ranking the 1994 Draft, it is a time-honored tradition for the Skipper to provide his annual synopsis of the Hot Stove League Draft. Never one to break with custom, once again I submit my considered analysis of the HSL Player Draft, in order of selection:

REDS

- Strength: Up the middle (catcher, SS, 2B).
- Weakness: At the corners (Troy Neel and Terry Pendleton are his starters? There must be some mistake.)
- Best Pick: Mike Piazza in the 2nd (a budding superstar).
- Costliest Blunder: Terry Pendleton in the 8th (on the downhill slide).

Comments: Some might say that Curby "stumbled" onto another contending team, but Curby picks a competitive crew year in and year out. Look for another finish in the cash.

Skipper's Predicted Finish:

1st.

HSL Consensus Finish:

2nd.

CHIEFS

Strength: Probably the muscular outfield (it only any one of the happy trio of Canseco, Strawberry or Davis has a decent year).

Weakness: Starting pitching. (He can't "Blame it on Rijo." It's the rest of the corps that stinks.)

Best Pick: Jose Canseco in the 3rd (look for a big year from the Big Bopper).

Costliest Blunder: Wasting two picks on the Strawberry-Davis tandem?

Comments: B.T. annually maintains that the winner of the HSL is always the one with the most luck. Indeed, the only way that the Chiefs will finish on top this year is if B.T. supplants Lou Gehrig as the luckiest man on the face of the earth.

Skipper's Predicted Finish:

4th.

HSL Consensus Finish:

9th. (Three managers have slated the Chiefs for the cellar. Ouch. Has this man earned no respect from his peers?)

SENATORS

Strength: Infield. (And oh, what an infield it is.)

Weakness: The outfield might be a titch on the soft side.

Best Pick: A plethora to choose from, but let's go with the grand larceny of Pudge Rodriguez in the 7th.

Costliest Blunder: Relying on Ozzie Smith for the starting shortstop cannot prove to be a good move.

Comments: While Skipper annually seems to be a bit more optimistic about his club than others following the annual player draft, it seems certain that the 1994 Senators squad will be a contender. While a 2nd place finish is projected, with a little good luck, a finish on top of the heap is not out of the question.

Skipper's Predicted
Finish: 2nd.

HSL Consensus
Finish: 5th. (There are some small and bitter people out there.)

RED SOX

Strength: Infield, overall balance.

Weakness: Third base, left-handed pitching.

Best Pick: The League consensus was Kenny Lofton in the 4th. Skipper thinks that was a little early. Barry Larkin in the 3rd will prove to be the pick of the draft, if he can only play 130 games or more.

Costliest Blunder: Is there any question? Jeff Fassero in round 7.

Comments: Strangely enough, the Strange One picked a fairly conventional team this year. With a solid infield (with the glaring exception of third base) and good balance all the way around, the Red Sox should be an upper division HSL team in 1994. With solid management during the season, a finish in the top three is a definite possibility.

Skipper's Predicted
Finish: 5th.

HSL Consensus
Finish: 6th.

REDBIRDS

Strength: Right side of the infield, right-handed starting pitching.

Weakness: Left-handed pitching, relievers, left side of the infield.

Best Pick: Roger Clemens in the 4th (Comeback Player of the Year?)

Costliest Blunder: Kevin Mitchell in the 5th. (There is no cure for this "team cancer.")

Comments: This started off as a helluva team, through the first four rounds (Thomas, Sandberg, Puckett and Clemens). Picking up Fat Boy in the 5th started the downhill slide. Rounds 7 through 15, on balance, were Ugly. Look for the Redbirds to drop a few notches from last year's upper division berth. Sophomore jinx, or just too many barley pops? You be the judge.

Skipper's Predicted
Finish:

9th.

HSL Consensus
Finish:

3rd. (So maybe I'm too tough on the guy.)

SKIPJACKS

Strength: Hmmm. Let me get back to you on this one.

Weakness: Where should I begin? How about infield, shortstop, third base, relievers, and first base.

Best Pick: I'll get back to you on this one, too.

Costliest Blunder: Cecil Fielder in the 5th. (Take it from me, Itchie, Cecil does not put up big numbers in this League.)

Comments: Unfortunately for Itchie, the 1994 Skipjacks team looks as raggedy-ass as he did on Draft Night. (What, were you on a three day crack bender with Eric Show?) It will take a minor miracle, a lot of cash, or both, for this team to finish in the upper division.

Skipper's Predicted
Finish:

10th.

HSL Consensus
Finish:

7th. (Looks like a few pity votes were mixed in.)

TRIBE

Strength: Center field, right field.

Weakness: Pitching, left side of infield

Best Pick: Chuck Knoblauch in the 4th. (Watch for a big year.)

Costliest Blunder: John Olerud in the 1st (first basemen are plentiful, and John just had his

career year).

Comments: Underbelly has pieced together a very solid team, impressive enough that the League consensus is that the Tribe will finish 1st in 1994. But Skipper ranks the Tribe as a 7th place team, banking on another year of mismanagement by the Tribe helmsman.

Skipper's Predicted
Finish: 7th.

HSL Consensus
Finish: 1st. (Some short memories out there.)

BLUES

Strength: Starting pitching, outfield.

Weakness: Middle infield, relief pitching.

Best Pick: Skipper likes Andy Van Slyke in the 9th. Look for Andy to return to pre-1993 form.

Costliest Blunder: This one's easy: Wil Cordero in the 8th. Wil the Shill would have lasted at least three or four more rounds.

Comments: The '94 Blues are not a great squad by any definition, but there is some definite potential. If Williams and Jefferies have the years that they are capable of, and if McBlunder proves to be prudent in putting his eggs in the starting pitching basket, an upper division finish is certainly possible. Which should not be confused with *probable*.

Skipper's Predicted
Finish: 11th.

HSL Consensus
Finish: 10th.

TIGERS

Strength: Potential, potential, potential.

Weakness: Sheer number of head cases.

Best Pick: Ellis Burks in the 13th? If this former 2nd rounder (believe me, I remember

it well) gets caught up in the mile-high enthusiasm, look out.

Costliest Blunder: Picking back-to-back time bombs in the 4th and 5th.

Comments: The only way to coach this bunch to a decent season is to have Sigmund Freud sitting on the bench. Has there ever been a greater collection of loonies on one team? Rickey Henderson, Bobby Kelly, Danny Tartabull, Gary Sheffield, Bret Saberhagen. If Big Guy can snare Eric Davis and Darryl Strawberry from B.T. in a trade, the '94 Tigers will be set to make a sequel to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. But there is talent there, and this will result in an upper division finish, maybe even in the money, for the Tigers.

Skipper's Predicted
Finish: 3rd.

HSL Consensus
Finish: 4th.

CUBS

Strength: Solid, solid outfield.

Weakness: Pitching may be suspect; middle infield definitely is.

Best Pick: Charlie Hayes in the 11th was an absolute steal. (Mike Devereaux in the 12th wasn't bad, either.)

Costliest Blunder: Dozing off during rounds 6 through 9 (Phillips, Mussina, Schilling and Hill).

Comments: Once again, Shamu's acute vision and strong neck muscles served him well during the Draft, as he jumped on the HSL information highway and benefited from every other member's intense preparation. With some skilled management during the season, the Cubs could be in contention for a first division finish.

Skipper's Predicted
Finish: 6th.

HSL Consensus
Finish: 8th.

BRONX BOMBERS

Strength: Starting pitching.

Weakness: With the exception of Palmeiro at 1st, the infield is impotent.

Best Pick: Could be Mike Greenwell in the 9th. This gritty competitor, if healthy, will have another good year.

Costliest Blunder: Hitting the panic button on Rick Wilkins in the 2nd. Wilkins is good, but he's no 2nd round pick.

Comments: The '94 Bronx Bombers are a mixed bag of talent and soft spots. It is unlikely that Mouse will be able to pilot his Bombers to an upper division finish in '94, but improvement on last's years 11th place finish is certainly a possibility. On the other hand, the HSL members have made the Bombers the consensus cellar team in '94. So go ahead, Mouse, prove us wrong.

Skipper's Predicted Finish: 12th.

HSL Consensus Finish: 12th.

PIRATES

Strength: Starting pitching.

Weakness: Infield, team finances.

Best Pick: Tom Glavine in the 4th or Alex Fernandez in the 5th (two solid starters).

Costliest Blunder: Tim Salmon in the 2nd. Watch for that sophomore jinx.

Comments: When SloPay does talk, he usually says that "pitching is everything" in this League. If so, the '94 Pirates may do just fine, since there are some solid starting pitchers on the roster, and a couple of not-so-bad relievers. Of course, the infield looks like so much Swiss cheese, but perhaps the wily SloPay can fill these many holes during the season. In any event, SloPay has vowed to beat last year's managerial performance of only two transactions after the initial draft.

Skipper's Predicted Finish: 8th.

HSL Consensus Finish: 11th.

RECAP

<u>Skipper's Prediction</u>	<u>HSL Consensus</u>
1. Reds	1. Tribe
2. Senators	2. Reds
3. Tigers	3. Redbirds
4. Chiefs	4. Tigers
5. Red Sox	5. Senators
6. Cubs	6. Red Sox
7. Tribe	7. Skipjacks
8. Pirates	8. Cubs
9. Redbirds	9. Chiefs
10. Skipjacks	10. Blues
11. Blues	11. Pirates
12. Bronx Bombers	12. Bronx Bombers

How would the '94 draftees have shaped up as teams with the points scored in 1993? We're glad you asked. My trusty assistant, L.K., vice president of statistical operations within the Senators' organization, has calculated point totals for this year's drafted teams from last year's points. Summaries are enclosed. Here's how it came out:

1994 Draft with 1993 Points

1.	Skipjacks	8522
2.	Cubs	8478
3.	Senators	8437
4.	Bronx Bombers	8341
5.	Pirates	8159
6.	Red Sox	8047
7.	Blues	7891
8.	Tigers	7605
9.	Reds	7584
10.	Tribe	7427
11.	Chiefs	7368
12.	Redbirds	6958

Some startling results.

Also enclosed for your files are the finalized team rosters for 1994, as well as the '94 player drafts, and a revised and corrected Owners/Managers Directory.

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES!

As we near the season opener, and embark upon the 1994 HSL campaign, best wishes to all for a fun and competitive season.

Skipper