



FROM THE BULLPEN

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SKIPJACKS SKIP INTO UPPER DIVISION

On the strength of the third consecutive shutout from his elongated pitching ace, Randy Johnson, Itchie piloted his mighty Skipjacks to a phenomenal 450-point week, and thereby into the upper division of the Hot Stove League. With 86 points from geeky Randy alone, the Skipjacks' much-maligned (by Itchie) pitching staff sailed to a 209-point pitching week, tops in the League this year (the next highest total was the 177 points by the Redbirds' staff during the third week of the season). Once given up for dead, it looks like the Skipjacks are back in the hunt.

Here's how things stand:

WEEK IX

(Current Points-Points Behind Leader-Week IX Points)

1. Redbirds	3231-000 -275
2. Cubs	2995-236-375
3. Chiefs	2941-290-316
4. Reds	2864-367-307
5. Red Sox	2849-382-362

6. Skipjacks	2845-386-455
7. Bronx Bombers	2818-413-286
8. Blues	2730-501-389
9. Tribe	2517-714-257
10. Tigers	2354-877-248
11. Pirates	2328-903-164
12. Senators	2184-1047-231

From top to bottom, here's how it went during the ninth week:

1. Skipjacks	455
2. Blues	389
3. Chiefs	375
4. Red Sox	362
5. Cubs	316
6. Reds	307
7. Bronx Bombers	286
8. Redbirds	275
9. Tribe	257
10. Tigers	248
11. Senators	231
12. Pirates	164

The top hitting team for the week was the Blues, with 254 points. The weakest hitting team for the week was the Pirates, with 168. The top pitching team for the week was, as noted, the Skipjacks, with 209. The worst pitching team of the week was the Pirates, with a negative 2 on the balance sheet.

The Pirates put together one of the grimmer weeks of the year, chalking up a grand total of 164 points. Only the Tigers (Week 7, 136 points) and the Senators (Week 4, 138 points) have fared quite this poorly for one week. And yet, with as miserable a week as the Pirates had, the Pirates still boast a 144-point lead over -- that's right -- the last-place Senators.

INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCES

We all know from our stats pack that Frank Thomas is the top scoring hitter with 344 points, which averages out to 38.22 points a week for the nine weeks. Let's take a look at the top ten hitters in the League:

	Avg. Per Total Week
1. Frank Thomas	344 38.22
Redbirds	
2. Ken Griffey	296 32.89
Chiefs	
3. Jose Canseco	276 30.67
Chiefs	
4. Kenny Lofton	262 29.11
Red Sox	

5. Albert Belle	261 29.00
Cubs	
6. Jeff Bagwell	255 28.33
Senators	
7. Will Clark	252 28.00
Cubs	
8. Paul O'Neill	246 27.33
Red Sox	
9. Andres Galarraga	244 27.11
Tigers	
10. Joe Carter	239 26.56
Redbirds	

Now let's take a look at the top ten pitchers in the League at this point:

1. Greg Maddux	284 31.56
Blues	
2. Doug Drabek	231 25.67
Reds	
3. Lee Smith	210 23.33
Bronx Bombers	
4. David Cone	206 22.88
Red Sox	
5. Roger Clemens	205 22.78
Redbirds	
6. Mel Rojas	196 21.78
Redbirds	
7. Mike Mussina	189 21.00
Cubs	
8. Danny Jackson	188 20.89
Chiefs	
9. Greg McMichael	187 20.78
Skipjacks	
Tie Jimmy Key	182 20.22
Bronx Bombers	
Mike Jackson	
Chiefs	

Wait just a minute. Mel Rojas, Danny Jackson, Greg McMichael, and Mike Jackson are in the top 10 for points scored by pitchers? Mark my words. Next year, I take my *first* pitcher in the 16th round. There is no other way to do it.

AROUND THE HORN

- As I look at the player rankings through nine weeks, the Senators

have the 8th-best catcher (Ivan Rodriguez), the 2nd-best first baseman (Jeff Bagwell), the 2nd-best designated hitter (Paul Molitor), the 6th-best second baseman (Carlos Baerga), the 4th-best third baseman (Robin Ventura), the 10th-best shortstop (Mike Bordick), the 10th-best left fielder (Turner Ward), and the 7th-best reliever (Trevor Hoffman). So why are the Senators in last? They can't get a break. Example No. 274: Reliever Bill Riskey, who managed to score a grand total of negative 1 point for the Senators after scoring 64 points as a free agent, promptly picks up a win the very night after he was released by the Senators. And the night after that? Another win in relief. Very nice.

- Signing Will VanLandingham will undoubtedly prove to be a savvy move by the Red Sox. But one question, Possum. Who is he?

- It is noteworthy that Possum cut loose Ed Sprague to make room for Mr. VanLandingham. This, after Possum all but guaranteed Ed's eventual admission into the Hall of Fame during trade talks.

- I see that Curby picked up Dwight Gooden in the Free Agent Draft on June 6. Very, very crafty.

- Slo-Pay has decided to join the elite club of team owners who have bolstered their team's pennant hopes by picking up ex-Senators in the Free Agent Draft. After watching ex-Senator Ken Caminiti soar to stardom after being picked up by the Redbirds, and after seeing Derek Bell's mercurial performance enhancement after being ditched by the Senators and salvaged by the Chiefs, Slo-Pay jumped on the band wagon and signed former Senators Alex Cole and Paul Sorrento. To that I say, live it up.

- While the manager of the 2nd-place Chiefs continues to whine about his team being deluged by injuries (Mark McGwire, Robbie Thompson, Chris Sabo, Darryl Strawberry, and others have all spent time on the D.L. this year), his team continues to do it with smoke and twine (that's a quote from B.T.). Bernie Williams, he of the New York Yankees, recently put together a sparkling 7-RBI game. The rich just keep on getting richer.

'Nuf said. I could continue to whine and moan about the misfortunes visited upon the luckless Senators' squad, but how would that profit the League or the world at large? Rather, I choose to simply follow Underbelly's lead and pray for a long and acrimonious players' strike. If I can't win it all this year, let the winner have an asterisk next to his name.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS, PLEASE (Sinclair Baby Shower)

For Saturday, July 23, that is. On that date, Shamu will get his first shower of the summer. Actually, he took one in mid-May after a taxing co-ed softball game, but this will be the first shower "given" to him. Please plan to be at the Ernst residence at 7 p.m. that evening, as we toast and roast Shamu and Jan, and help to prepare them for the joys of parenting. Regrets only. Mesh mandatory.

And so it goes for another week in the life of a Hot Stove Leaguer. See you next week.

Skipper