



# FROM THE BULLPEN

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Eastern Nebraska Division  
1995 Season

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## LOSER AND STILL CHAMPION: ITCHIE

Okay, so he made the last out in the bottom of the 9th in his Pee Wee League championship game. And yes, he went to homecoming, prom, and every other high school and college social function with his cousin, Agnes. All right, so he locked himself in his car and played possum while his buddies got the crap kicked out of them a couple of times. And yes, he is badly in need of liposuction and a cranium pelt. Let's just face it: In almost every aspect of Itchie's life, he's a total loser. But in the only arena that really matters, the Hot Stove League of Eastern Nebraska, *he is a winner*. And a two-time winner at that.

A second round of congratulations to the 1995 Hot Stove League Champion, the King, the Mahatma, the Big Dog, the Earl of Egypt, the Swami of the Sands, our idol, mentor, friend and leaguemate, the separated-at-birth twin of Sammie Kalifa, you know him, you love him, you can't live without him:

**JOHN "ITCHIE" THIELEN**

## But How in the World?

Let's take a look at how Itchie built his 1995 Skipjack championship team. Here is how he drafted them:

1. Greg Maddux
2. Craig Biggio
3. Mike Mussina
4. Darren Daulton
5. Jeff Fassero
6. Juan Gonzalez
7. Paul O'Neill
8. Tony Fernandez
9. Hal Morris
10. Randy Myers
11. Brian McRae
12. Chuck Finley
13. Tim Lincecum
14. Shane Reynolds
15. Todd Zeile
16. Felix Jose
17. Bobby J. Jones
18. Eric Karros
19. Darren Lewis
20. Bret Barberie
21. Harold Baines
22. Brad Ausmus
23. Kevin Stocker
24. Joe Boever
25. Benji Gil
26. Mike Henneman
27. Eddie Murray
28. Michael Tucker

Taking Greg Maddux in the 1st was at the same time brilliant and a no-brainer. Craig

Biggio in the 2nd was likewise a savvy pick. Itchie continued on a roll by taking Mike Mussina in the 3rd, another fine selection. After stumbling a bit in the 4th and 5th with Daulton and Fassero, Itchie rallied with a number of fine picks in the middle and lower rounds. For example, Chuck Finley in the 12th, Shane Reynolds in the 14th, Bobby Jones in the 17th, Eric Karros in the 18th, and the ageless Eddie Murray in the 27th, all were nice selections.

Although Itchie added a few solid players via the free agent draft (Pat Rapp, Joe Oliver), the Skipjacks team that won the title was largely the team that was picked by Itchie on April 29, 1995. From his initial 28-man roster, 21 of the same players were still on the team at season's end. Other than Darren Daulton, who was released by Itchie because of injury, the other initial draftees of the Skipjacks who were later released are a rather forgettable bunch: Brad Ausmus, Bret Barberie, Benji Gil, Michael Tucker, Felix Jose, and the always-tough Joe Boever.

In retrospect, Itchie did exactly what every fine manager is supposed to do — that is, he picked a fine team and then went home from the dance with the one who brung him. Unlike some of the rest of us, he didn't overmanage his team to death, spending every waking moment scanning the free agent draft list and exceeding the gross national product of Guam on roster-move fees.

## The Movers and Shakers

Itchie was in the minority, however, when it came to standing pat with the initial draft rosters. Only Mouse ended the year with more of his original team (24/28) on his final roster. Here is an unaudited listing of the number of players retained by each team from start to finish:

Bronx Bombers	24/28
Skipjacks	21/28
Cubs	20/28
Redbirds	18/28
Tigers, Blues	16/28
Tribe	14/28
Reds, Chiefs	12/28
Pirates, Senators, Red Sox	11/28

As may be seen, making lots of free agent selections and roster moves may fill a lot of holes and allow a team to be competitive (e.g., the Red Sox), or simply amount to lots of money spent for nothing (Senators).

## Now Hear This, Slo-Pay

It's time to pay the piper. Since the moment that he clinched the 1995 title, the Skipjacks' manager has been demanding not only repeated recognition in the *Bullpen*, but more importantly (to him), immediate payment from other League members. Let's do it this way:

1. The 4th through 10th place teams (Blues, Reds, Tigers, Tribe, Bronx Bombers, Pirates and Chiefs) should each pay their \$100 to Itchie.
2. The 11th and 12th place teams (Senators and Cubs\*) should pay \$100 each to Jim Ed (much as it pains me to do this).
3. The Red Sox, the 3rd place finisher, keeps the entry fee and pays nothing.

Either send your checks directly to Itchie and Jim Ed, or hold onto them for our next junket to the Reservation for gambling and liquor. Any thoughts on when we might go north?

## REMINISCING

Given the 1995 performance of the Senators, I am doing lots of reminiscing these days, although not about the Hot Stove League. Since we are now in the midst of the Fall Classic, my thoughts recently took me back to the only perfect game ever pitched in a World Series. On October 8, 1956, just a few days before the birth of the Senators' manager, Don Larsen pitched a perfect game in Game 5 of the Series between the Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers. The score of the game was 2-0. The pitcher for the Dodgers, Sal Maglie, pitched a beauty of his own, giving up only 5 hits and 2 runs. One of the runs came on a solo blast by the Mick. What a day.

I also got to thinking the other day about the 1975 World Series between the Big Red Machine and the Boston Red Sox. The Reds bested the Red Sox 4 games to 3, overcoming a 3-0 Boston lead in the 7th game at Boston. The Reds scored in the 9th inning of that game to win. Earlier, in Game 6 on October 21, 1975 (five games after Game 5 — must have been rain?) Carlton Fisk hit his famous home run off the foul pole in the 12th inning. What a Series!

What is remarkable about the 1975 World Series victory by the Reds is that the famous hitting machine performed extremely subpar against the Boston pitchers. Johnny Bench batted .207 for the Series (6/29); George Foster .279; Tony Perez .179; Davey Concepcion .179; Joe Morgan .259; Ken Griffey .269; and Cesar Geronimo .280. Only Pete Rose, who was 10 for 27 (.370), had a stellar hitting series. The Reds instead had to rely upon their pitching staff (Don Gullett, Jack Billingham, Rawly Eastwick, Gary Nolan, Fred Norman, Will McEnaney, and Clay Carroll) to stave off the dangerous Red Sox.

It appears that we are in the midst of another true "Fall Classic," the Indians last

night having won their first Series game with Eddie Murray delivering the clutch winning blow in the bottom of the 11th. I can't wait to see what happens in the rest of the Series. Go Tribe.

## 1995 HIGHLIGHTS

There were many highlights in the 1995 major league season, not the least of which was settling the strike and actually playing some baseball this year. We will all have our own favorite memories of the year, but let me suggest just a few high points:

- Cal Ripken - 2131 (what else).
- Eddie Murray's 3000th hit.
- Albert Belle hitting 51 home runs, 52 doubles.
- Greg Maddux going 19-2.
- Randy Johnson going 18-2.
- Jose Mesa chalking up 40-some saves.
- The Rockies making the playoffs.
- John VanderWal setting a new mark for pinch hits and pinch-hit home runs in a season.

## MISCELLANEOUS

→ Now that baseball is over, we can all focus on golf. Who is leading the damned league, anyway, B.T.? Is anybody out there?

→ Big Guy finally conceded my superior memory and paid off on our bet on the location of the initial Hot Stove League draft in 1985. With his star witness (Shamu\*) shaping up to be as credible as Mark Fuhrman, Big Guy decided to throw in the towel and pay me off. So it's official. The 1985 HSL draft was held at my townhouse at Chalet Townhomes. And that's that.

→ Next week: A look back at the 1902 expansion Houston Colt 45s (one of the worst teams of all time), and more reminiscing and commentary.

Skipper