



FROM THE BULLPEN

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The Hot Stove League
Eastern Nebraska Division
1996 Season

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Brethren:

Still no response from Matt Greenberger or anyone else at Stats, Inc. to my letter of October 2, 1996. Either they are too busy working on their fantasy football, baseball and hockey leagues and newsletters, or they are intentionally ignoring us. In any event, I have corresponded again with Matt (see enclosed copy) to ask for a response, as well as some additional information about the 1996 season. I will let you know if a response is received. Meanwhile, Big Guy and/or Magpie are reportedly researching our options for other stats services for the 1997 season in the event that Stats, Inc. gives us the finger.

1996 REVISITED

Not content to let my miserable 1996 season die and slip from memory, let me share with you here a few statistics from the year that was. First, the individual player totals, the top 34 hitters (the 600+-point men) and top 20 pitchers as they are gleaned from the final Stats, Inc. report:

TOP HITTERS

Name	Points	Draft Spot
1. Alex Rodriguez	834	183

2. Ellis Burks	797	181
3. Albert Belle	768	5
4. Barry Bonds	766	7
5. Chuck Knoblauch	752	18
6. Roberto Alomar	744	12
7. Mo Vaughn	736	21
8. Gary Sheffield	727	34
9. Frank Thomas	718	6
(T) Griffey, Jr	718	1
11. Brady Anderson	703	85
12. Mike Piazza	692	3
13. Jeff Bagwell	690	20
14. Andres Galarraga	689	43
15. Jim Thome	686	32
16. Ken Caminiti	686	109
17. Rafael Palmeiro	681	26
18. Barry Larkin	677	13
19. Edgar Martinez	665	14
20. Mark McGwire	661	222
21. Juan Gonzalez	658	33
22. Chipper Jones	657	52
23. Dante Bichette	652	24
24. Bernard Gilkey	634	146
25. Ivan Rodriguez	631	42
26. Steve Finley	629	110
27. Jay Buhner	628	53
(T) Todd Hundley	628	173
29. Paul Molitor	612	105
(T) Manny Ramirez	612	17
31. Vinny Castilla	610	45
32. Cal Ripken	608	21
33. John Jaha	604	311
34. Bernie Williams	603	69

TOP PITCHERS

Name	Points	Draft Spot
1. John Smoltz	687	39
2. Kevin Brown	610	102
3. Trevor Hoffman	585	137
4. Greg Maddux	555	2
5. Pat Hentgen	518	267
6. Rob Nen	513	166
7. Roberto Hernandez	502	142
8. Hideo Nomo	500	36
9. Mariano Rivera	500	Supp
10. Mel Rojas	490	138

As the first few entries above acutely demonstrate, draft position and order of finish do not correlate in any identifiable fashion. Proof positive of B.T.'s assertions that this league is based "entirely on luck."

1996 DRAFT - ROUND 1

Since the 1st round of the draft is just about everyone's barometer about how things will go for the year, let's take a look at how each of us fared with our 1st round selections:

Team / Player	Points	Final Ranking
1. Skipjacks/Griffey, Jr.	718	9(T) ¹
2. Redbirds/Maddux	555	4 ²
3. Red Sox/M. Piazza	692	12
4. Reds/C. Baerga ³	U ⁴	U

5. Blues/A. Belle	768	3
6. Tigers/F. Thomas	718	9(T)
7. Tribe/B. Bonds	766	4
8. Bombers/R. Johnson	U	U
9. Pirates/T. Salmon	551	45
10. Chiefs/L. Walker	U	U
11. Senators/C. Biggio	565	40
12. Cubs*/R. Alomar	744	6

1 But foolishly traded after a minor injury. "It was the hamate bone, McBlunder. They threw it away!"

2 Among pitchers.

3 See comments from last issue.

4 U means, obviously, unknown – because the points were so few and not listed in our last Stats pak.

The 1st round selections, in retrospect, did not bode well for Magpie, Mouse or yours truly. B.T. overcame Larry Walker's injury-plagued season, while Itchie and Shamu* floundered in spite of what turned out to be sterling 1st round picks.

1996 DRAFT - ROUND 2

Just because it is so much fun to point out blunders by others, let's take a look at the 2nd round of the 1996 draft, in retrospect.

<u>Team / Player</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Final Ranking</u>
1. Skipjacks/B. Larkin	677	18
2. Redbirds/E. Martinez	605	19
3. Red Sox/K. Lofton	595	34
4. Reds/J. Valentin	476	U
5. Blues/M. Ramirez	612	28
6. Tigers/C. Knoblauch		752
7. Tribe/J. Edmonds	U	U
8. Bombers/J. Bagwell	690	13
9. Pirates/M. Vaughn	736	7
10. Chiefs/Matt Williams	U	U
11. Senators/C. Ripken	608	31
12. Cubs*/D. Bichette	652	22

And what the heck, let's take another look at that fateful 16th round of the draft:

1. Skipjacks/H. Morris
2. Redbirds/O. Merced
3. Red Sox/T. Candiotti
4. Reds/J. Blauser
5. Blues/O. Hershiser
6. Tigers/Bobby Jones
7. Tribe/S. Alomar
8. Bombers/R. Clayton
9. Pirates/J. Montgomery
10. Chiefs/A. *Rodriguez*
11. Senators/G. Gaetti
12. Cubs*/E. *Burks*

1997 DRAFT

Between now and draft day on March 22, 1997, there will doubtless be hundreds of mock drafts conducted by members of

the Hot Stove League, collectively during formal and informal group gatherings, individually in the privacy of our own homes and minds, and on the Oprah Chatroom on the Internet, by Itchie. From my discussions with others about next year's draft, and from my intimate knowledge of the preferences and tendencies of my fellow owners and managers, let me be the first to put in writing a projected 1997 draft:

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| 1. B.T. | Mo Vaughn |
| 2. Jim Ed | Mo Vaughn |
| 3. Underbelly | Mo Vaughn |
| 4. Possum | Mo Vaughn |
| 5. Big Guy | Mo Vaughn |
| 6. Magpie | Mo Vaughn |
| 7. McBlunder | Mo Vaughn |
| 8. Shamu* | Mo Vaughn |
| 9. Skipper | Mo Vaughn |
| 10. Slap | Mo Vaughn |
| 11. Itchie | Mo Vaughn |
| 12. Mouse | Mo Vaughn ⁵ |

Do not, I repeat, do not miss B.T.'s shindig in Lincoln on the evening of Friday, November 1. I am told that there are some special surprises in store for everyone, and for those of you who don't know it, when B.T. throws a party, it's a party. Bring a lampshade and designated driver.

BALLS AND STRIKES

➤ To those of you who were planning on going to St. Louis this week for the Fall Classic, I commiserate. It would have been a helluva trip. Thanks to Jim Ed for his hard work in lining up plane and game tickets. And by the way, that'll be \$300, Magpie. Sorry it didn't work out for you.

➤ I was up early last Saturday morning with The Will-bur and was pleasantly surprised to learn that 5:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning is prime time for infomercials. However, I was surprised and more than a little disappointed to find that

⁵ Unknown to Shamu*, this is the first in a series of subliminal messages which will be sent to him between now and March, to try and prevent him from snagging Barry Bonds out from under me.)

(Mo Vaughn, Mo Vaughn, Mo Vaughn, Mo Vaughn, Mo Vaughn.)

NOVEMBER 1 PARTY

the once-respectable Jim Lampley is now hawkling "Eagle Eye" sunglasses. I have to confess that *I am* thinking about buying some. Did you know that you can see sunsets and oceans with the crystal clarity of a soaring eagle when you wear Eagle Eye eyewear?

➤ I also learned all about "Making Money" from Don Lapre, the snot-nosed punk who unabashedly admits to making \$50- to \$80,000 a week through his 1-900 lines and his newspaper adds for second-hand junk. Since Underbelly's tour of duty with the B.N. will soon come to an end, I am thinking that 1-900 is the way he needs to go. He will soon be awash with cash.

➤ Another proffered explanation for Itchie's malperformance this year is that he has been spending too much time getting in touch with his soft side, trying to help himself better connect with his wife and baby daughter. Instead of keeping up with baseball by watching ESPN each night, rumor has it that Itchie was viewing and reviewing his now-favorite four movies on videotape: *Waiting to Exhale*; *Fried Green Tomatoes*; *Steel Magnolias*; and *Men Don't Leave*. I always knew there was something funny about this guy.

➤ Mouse reportedly was heading to the Big Apple last weekend to see his beloved Yankees square off against the Atlanta Braves in the Fall Classic. Although I haven't heard, since the Saturday game was rained out, I have to assume that Mouse witnessed the 12-1 spanking on Sunday, including seeing the Curaçao Comet, Andruw Jones, wrestle away the Mick's distinction of being the youngest player ever to hit a World Series home run, on the Mick's 65th birthday, of all days. Mouse has reportedly returned to Omaha where he is in deep therapy.

➤ Don't know if any of you noticed, but McBlunder's look-alike, Ted Bessell (the long-suffering boyfriend of Marlo Thomas in *That Girl*), passed away a couple of weeks ago at age 61. RIP, Ted.

➤ I am providing you herewith an article which recently appeared in an Omaha senior citizens' magazine known as *New Horizons*, referring to legendary Baltimore Oriole announcer, Rex Barney, who hails from Omaha. Jim Ed and I had the pleasure of meeting the gregarious Mr. Barney when we were in Baltimore on our firm trip recently. A very nice man.

➤ By the way, I'm sure pleased that Fred McGriff and Javy Lopez spent the whole season on my dime resting up for the post-season, so they could both turn hotter than heck and blitz the Yankees. I always said they were going to be great.

A PIRATE LOOKS AT 40

The above heading will only have significance for those of us who are fans of The Great One, Jimmy Buffet, but suffice it to say that it had special meaning to me as I became the third Hot Stove Leaguer to pass into my fifth decade of existence. I frankly prefer not to say whether I spent the big day sobbing into my pillow as I played Jimmy's famous song over and over and over; throwing away the family fortune at the boats; throwing dollar bills at exotic dancers at the Bottoms Up Lounge; or celebrating quietly at home with my betrothed and idolizing issue. The point is, I am now 40 years old and that's that. At least I have an HSL title under my belt, which is more than I can say for the other two quadragenarians in the league.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No letters from league members to share with you this week, but I have to say that it has been a very fine year in

terms of responses from league members. Keep those cards and letters coming, boys. And by the way, Shamu* is the only one to date who has turned in (as requested) a copy of his final stats sheet from BJFB. The rest of you should please follow suit ASAP. I only need page 1. And don't forget about that other little matter involving you know what.

IT'S BEEN FUN

But this may be the final issue of *FTB* for calendar year 1996, depending on what the month of December holds. I embark upon a three-week trial of a chicken coop fire case in Ponca, Nebraska next week, and therefore will be closing down the *FTB* presses for a while. Perhaps there may be a chance to put out one more issue in December, but if not, let me say here that it's been a pleasure competing with you all in 1996.

I look forward to another great year next year, whether it be under the BJFB format or otherwise. *Viva la HSL.*

See ya.

Skipper