



FROM THE BULLPEN

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Eastern Nebraska Division
1997 Season

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WEEK 3: BIG MAC ATTACKS!

Defying logic, tall odds, and the natural order of the universe, the third week of the Hot Stove League season finds our own beloved McBlunder leading the HSL standings with 1,014 points, a 65-point cushion over the Evil Empire. Just in time for the first HSL Free Agent Draft, the Blues are enjoying their finest start ever, taking advantage of the powerful pitching performances of Jimmy Key, Kevin Appier, and Billy Wagner.

Not to burst the Elongated One's bubble, but McBlunder's lead after three weeks is not quite the equivalent of Tiger's nine-stroke lead after three rounds of the Masters. More like a one-shot lead on the field through one hole after ricocheting an errant shot off a golf cart and holing out for a birdie. But then again, maybe this really is his year.

Here's how things stack up after three weeks:

1. Blues	1014
2. Red Sox	949
3. Redbirds	944
4. Bronx Bombers	932
5. Senators	900
6. Tigers	891

7. Chiefs
8. Reds
9. Pirates
10. Skipjacks
11. Cubs*
12. Tribe

THIRD WEEK POINT TOTALS

1. Bronx Bombers	466
2. Senators	370
3. Blues	354
4. Red Sox	341
5. Reds	297
6. Skipjacks	287
7. Cubs*	285
8. Redbirds	279
9. Tigers	275
10. Chiefs	258
11. Pirates	250
12. Tribe	238

BALLS AND STRIKES

➤ McBlunder's Blues lead not only in overall score, but also in the pitching department with 422.

➤ Almost as incredible as McBlunder's position on top, Mouse's Bombers scored a scorching 466 points for the week, exactly the same as his first two weeks combined. Lofton, Beck and

884 Jeter must have 98% of this team's
863 points.

820
813 ➤ The Yackers are hurting a bit in the
709 pitching department with a total of 164
648 points through three weeks. Apparently a few of those points by Cone and Schilling have been negated by the moonwalking antics of Alvarez, Trachsel, Sanders and Schourek. But have heart, Itch, Jose Mesa is back, and with no pending arraignments.

➤ Big Guy's chief 1996 antagonist, Jay Bell, has more home runs and RBIs for the Chiefs (18th round) than his own first round namesake, Albert Joey. A crow stick if ever there was one.

➤ Consensus Draft Day team-to-beat, the Tribe, is off to a bit of a slow start with an anemic three-week average of 216 points per week. Frank Thomas is still looking for his first home run of the year, and U-belly is more than a little disappointed with Ellis, Jay, Greg Vaughn, Finley, and Blackjack. Can you say "ice cold"?

➤ The Senators' placement in the upper division after three weeks is likely their highest standing since the glory year of 1990. I haven't had a chance to look it up, but I can't really

remember being anywhere above 9th place for many, many moons.

SKIPPER'S MAILBAG

From the response to last issue's survey about the League trip (which was underwhelming, considering that I gave you all self-addressed, metered postcards to use – can I make it any easier on you?), it looks like the general consensus is that everybody would prefer to go to Atlanta to see brand-spanking new Turner Field, rather than back to Chicago and Milwaukee. On this (the six of you that responded) you were unanimous. As to the series to be seen, most of you prefer the Dodgers v. Braves series, July 18, 19 and 20. As such, I suggest that we all lock-in those dates and wait to see if Itchie can work his magic and obtain the FDR box for our use. More to follow.

CRAW STICKS

Here's what's eating you guys this week (assuming that I have correctly identified which comments are whose, since only two of you were bright enough to affix your names or nicknames to the card – what a cerebral group!):

B.T.: Two words - Larry Walker.

Underbelly: "Nothing, everything is going smooth." (*Editor's note: Bullshit.*)

Itchie: Ex-Skipjacks: Pat Rapp-shutout
Jimmy Key-shutout

Blowtorch Rivera has cost me two victories for David Cone. On opening night, my staff was 2-0, with 1 save. Since that time, they are 1-13, with one more save. Stellar!

Mouse: (*No comment.*)

Possun: 1. Nothing. I love my team! It's just a matter of time before they get rolling.

2. Whose this Sandy Alomar guy? Over/under on his season HR total – 11? 9? 12?

3. Janet Reno should launch an investigation (bi-partisan, of course) into Pettitte-Gate – the press has been very quiet ... what gives? Johnson/Pettitte on same team? Equitable relief?

4. These cards are a great idea! Plz send with free Runza coupons next time...

5. Get a life! Get voice mail! Keep office open until 6 p.m.!

6. Lots of early round disappointments – Thomas, Belle, Sheffield, Larkin, Vaughn, M., Sosa, Rivera ... whoever gets and stays hot could determine eventual outcome.

McBlunder: For only the second time in my 40 years in the Hot Stove League I reach the upper echelon – 2nd place, and of course it is the worst week of all to be at the top – the first free agent draft. I am sure to get some real gems from 2nd place. And I probably will never be in 2nd place again!



This issue of *FTB* comes to you from our satellite office in Ponca, Nebraska, where I am pursuing truth and justice for the next week or two. As soon as I return, a more fitting tribute to McBlunder will be forthcoming, if he manages to hold on to the top spot.

Skipper