



From the Bullpen

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Today...today...today, I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth. Dave asked me to be a guest writer for this week's *From the Bullpen*. I hope that my effort will be as capable as that of the Rube's yeoman effort a couple of weeks ago. But I have the feeling after you're done reading this, it will probably bear a more striking resemblance to the Unabomber's "Manifesto" than to what you've been accustomed to reading.

THE MOUSE THAT ROARED

Once again the Bronx Bombers lead the way with a slim 77-point margin over the Omaha Tom Gordons, with the Chiefs in 3rd, 133 points off the pace. I think this will be the most hotly contested season we've seen in a long time. Here's how they stand according to my Monday morning totals:

1. Bombers	2941
2. Tigers	2864
3. Chiefs	2808
4. Blues	2780
5. Skipjacks	2718
6. Senators	2703

7. Redbirds	2668
8. Cubs*	2646
9. Tribe	2404
10. Reds	2379
11. Reds Sox	2373
12. Pirates	2240

Amazingly enough, there are only 278 points separating 1st from 7th places. But the cream is starting to separate. The top four are starting to pull a little away from the field, with a definite grouping of four in the middle. Then there's the rest of Yeah, yeah, big deal.

TOMAHAWKS AND ARROWS

Well, without further ado, let's take a trip around the reservation. What better place to stop than the Chiefs' teepee?

CHIEFS: I like this team and would be surprised if they were not in the thick of it come September. Obviously, Scott needs a few more "Punches" and a few less "Judys." Believe me, I know what I'm talking about. I've got more "Mary Alices" on my team than a San Francisco bathhouse. I know it's

tempting to trade away some of your pitching for some much needed hitting. DON'T DO IT! It's still early and you'll be in the catbird seat come September. That is, if it's true that pitching wins this league. If not, then dump them. It might already be too late. (Like I'd know.)

BOMBERS: How about those Bombers! They've been getting "jiggy with it" since the git-go, thanks to David "Chief Never Sweat" Wells' stunning perfect game. I always hate to see a former member of the Tribe do well, but, doggone it, I just like the guy. He wears a uniform the way I wear a suit. Wells scored a big one that day for all the dumpy and disheveled. It's kind of fun being in 1st place, isn't it, Mouse? Just think of it as a marathon and you've just completed the first five miles. It's a long, long, long season.

REDS: I think I'm coming down with a case of blindness, 'cause I just don't see this team getting any better. One more season like this one and, if I were you, I'd make Ted draft from the hallway. We told you not to sit together again.

RED SOX: Speaking of the Red Sox, I can hear the panic-stricken call crackle over

the intercom now – “Omaha, we have a problem.” Yes, you do. Buckle up, Ted. I’m afraid your re-entry will be chuteless. In a normal year, a pitching staff consisting of Chan Ho Park, Felix Rodriguez, Mark Guthrie, Brett Saberhagen, and John Burkett would win the league going away. Go figure.

BLUES: Jon, you picked a good crew this year, and I’m not talking about Randy Johnson and Roger Clemens. Have you got a few minutes, Jon? Hop up here on my knee and let me tell you the story of Big John.

You see, there once was this first baseman from Toronto named John Olerud. He had this fantastic dream season where he batted .380 with a gazillion RBIs. Soooo, this dumb-ass owner (who will remain nameless) thought to himself, “*Hmmm, if he did it once, surely he’ll do it every year for the rest of his career.*” And so, that owner proceeded to draft him the next year in the 1st round. Well now, John had other ideas on how his career was going to go and proceeded to bat about .220 with 9 or 10 RBIs. But what really makes this a true horror story is that the names keep changing. Last year that same dumb-ass owner took Ellis Burks, thinking, “*Hmmm, if he can hit .340 with 40 HRs and 130 RBIs, then surely he’ll do it every year for the rest of his career.*” Do you see where I’m going with this, Jon? Your only problem was drafting ahead of me this year. I would have gotten around to drafting Clemens and Johnson eventually and your problems would have been solved.

CUBS*: Year after year, the Cubs* are my pace rabbit. Little “Binky” shoots out of the gate and I frantically try to catch him, only I can’t!! If my team scores 60 points, the Cubs* score 65 points. If my team scores 450 points, the Cubs* score 475 points.

Draft a good team for a change, Chuck. As long as I’m trapped on this treadmill, I’d just as soon be chasing you from the 2nd position instead of trying to overtake you for 8th place. Talk about frustrating. Okay, let’s talk about the Redbirds.

REDBIRDS: Try this little parable on for size.

“I’m not bad enough to get ‘good,’ and I’m not good enough to get better.”

I thought I had it all figured out. Denny would more than likely be in last place and I would be hot on his heels in 11th and closing fast. He would draft Ryan Christensen or Jason McDonald or some other 1.2 points-per-game, minor-league-bound, ghost-team hack, and I would draft Kerry Wood and rocket into 3rd or 4th place and never look back. I just didn’t count on Jim Ed holding his breath underwater for another week, long enough to grab Wood and start that climb up the ladder. Gee, Jim, we hardly got a chance to get to know you. Most people in my neighborhood stay around for a while.

I just love it when a plan comes together. Denny got his Ronald McDonald, Jim got his “Woody,” and I got David “Balsa Wrists” Ortiz. YEP.....IT’S ALL LUCK.

SENATORS: Sprinkle in a great infield with a dash of good pitching, add just a touch of a fair closer, mix it all together with a terrible outfield and this cake just might bake. It’s hard to find any obvious flaws other than the outfield. Luis Gonzalez, Brian Hunter, Jose Guillen and Jason Giambi aren’t going to scare many pitchers. Although, Paul O’Neill is capable of carrying this bunch, especially as hot as the Yankees are.

All in all, not a bad squad, but it’s my guess he will be presenting someone else with the green jacket this year.

TIGERS: I decided this year not to go after closers early. There always seems to be enough to go around. Plus, I read an article about Todd Jones and how “unhittable” he was after last year’s All-Star break. Yeah, he’s a real gunslinger all right. I’ve appeared at more major league games than he has.

So who is the leading closer this year? Trevor Hoffman? Mariano Rivera? Jeff Shaw? Nope—TOM GORDON. “WHAT THE HELL IS THAT ALL ABOUT?” It doesn’t take a genius to figure out the deal Big Guy had to make to pull this off. My guess is that if a stork drops off a little male

Drews on his front porch, he is obligated to name him Gordon. Actually, God came to me with a similar proposal concerning Magglio Ordonez, but my wife nixed the idea, something about not wanting a little Magglio Hurlbut running around the house. Sure, she’s not in 9th place in her Kraft league.

PIRATES: Denny, I got you in this league for one reason and one reason only, and you haven’t let me down. Keep up the good work.

Now to answer those questions for you. Yes, Kevin Orie will have more points at the end of the year than Chipper Jones. Yes, Brandt Brown will replace Sammy Sosa in the Cubs’ outfield. And, yes, Jeremy Gonzalez is a lock for the Cy Young. Patience, Grasshopper. Patience.

SKIPJACKS: How come it always looks like Johnny was probably filling up his car with gas at some Qwik Shop when he suddenly realizes, “Oh, shit, I’ve got to draft my team today”? Every year after the 8th or 9th round he “putters” up to the draft board and scribbles some name nobody else in the room wants, and then proceeds to be in the hunt year after year. What’s up with that, anyway? By the way, I think it’s really swell that Greg Vaughn is having such a fine year.

TRIBE: I’ve just been informed that John Smoltz has been put on the DL.

THE DILEMMA

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

Henry David Thoreau

Dave, thanks for the opportunity to vent a little. Keep up the good work. I’m thrilled that you got the All-Star tickets behind home plate at face value, plus round-trip airfare for \$70!!! You’re the best.

Underbelly