



From the Bullpen

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BLUES AND BOMBERS BATTLE FOR 1st

The epic struggle between the Killer B's – the Blues and Bronx Bombers – continues, with McBlunder's charges edging out Mouse's boys during Week 10 to hold the lead by a margin of 3707 to 3678. Big Mac and Mouse have the rest of the league scratching their collective noggins, as we contemplate how these two perennial league doormats (okay, *doormats* might be a little strong – how about *also-rans*?) can continue to occupy the top two spots on the HSL totem pole. Two questions come to mind: 1) *Are they for real?* and 2) *Can they keep it up?* And the answers: 1) Indeed; and 2) Time will tell.

The Week 10 standings, from top to bottom, look like this:

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 10

1. Blues	3707
2. Bombers	3678
3. Senators	3559
4. Chiefs	3471
5. Tigers	3470
6. Cubs*	3448
7. Redbirds	3362
8. Skipjacks	3270
9. Reds	3061
10. Red Sox	3022
11. Pirates	2946
12. Tribe	2917

The team with the highest point total for the week was my beloved Senators, who posted balanced pitching (239) and hitting (250) numbers while achieving an eye-popping total of 489 points, second best in the HSL this year. But for a bit of offensive anemia on Sunday, the Senators were looking at eclipsing half a thou for the week.

The Senators used their 489-point week to vault from 5th place into 3rd, skipping past the harmless Tigers and Chiefs and inching upward on the leaderboard. If not for solid weekly performances by the Bombers (357) and Blues (376), the Senators would have narrowed the gap even more. In fact, if the Blues and Bombers had posted weekly totals similar to the toothless Tigers (221 points), the Senators would be holding down the top spot in the league.

After the Senators' league-leading total for the week were the Crimson Chirpers, who rang up an impressive 443 point total for the week on hitting of 241 and pitching of 202. Through this burst of energy, the Redbirds were able to move up but a single spot, slithering past the standing-still Skipjacks into 7th place, the top rung of the ladder leading out of the sewer.

And speaking of the sewer, for the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Pirates have cinched up their collective trousers and vacated the HSL outhouse, albeit with a six-foot strand of toilet paper tagging along. After a sizzling 371-point week, coupled with a 241-point week from the team in the 11-hole, the Pirates have been replaced in the league cellar by none other than – you guessed it – the Tribe. Get used to your sur-

roundings, U-belly, because it looks like you've signed a long-term lease.

WEEK 10 TOTALS

1. SENATORS	489
2. Redbirds	443
3. Cubs*	378
4. Blues	376
5. Pirates	371
6. Bombers	357
7. Reds	334
8. Red Sox	317
9. Chiefs	315
10. Skipjacks	288
11. Tribe	241
12. Tigers	221

Despite a short week because of injury, Mark McGwire continues to be the league MVP with 411 points, almost a century mark on the field. There will probably be no catching him. However, there is a refreshing change in the pitching leadership, with the Senators' own Greg Maddux using two well-pitched wins to chalk up 67 points for the week, putting him in the top spot for the Cy Young Award with 315 points, and No. 2 overall for all players combined.

The top hitting team for the week was the Cubs* with 263 points, just ahead of the Pirates' 260. The top pitching team for the week was the aforementioned Senators with 239, ahead of the Redbirds' 202 pitching points for the week. The worst pitching team for the week was the Skipjacks with a sorrowful total of 42 points for the

week, just 10 more than the 32 notched by Andy Pettitte in his single outing.

The top hitting team for the year is still the Tigers, whose 2380 points are just ahead of the 2359 of the Blues. The team with the fewest hitting points through ten weeks is the Tribe with 1757 points, despite the prolific 54-point hitting week of Carlos "El Blondo Grande" Delgado.

The top individual hitter for the week was the *En Fuego* Sammy Sosa of the Bronx Bombers with 60 points, including something like eight homeruns in seven days. The distinction of having the *worst* best hitter during Week 10 goes to the Reds, whose top batsman was Roberto Alomar with a meager 22 points.

The top pitching team for the year continues to be the overachieving Bombers hurlers with 1539 points, even after a lackluster 118-point pitching week. A distant second is the Chiefs staff with 1381 points, followed by the Blues with 1348. The crummiest pitching staff for the year is the Red Sox with 773 points, trailing the 11th-best Pirates staff total of 834.

As mentioned, Senator Maddux scored the most pitching points in Week 10 with 67 over two fab outings. A close second goes to Reds moundman Jaret Wright with 65 points. The week's *worst* best pitching award goes to the Bombers, with Tim Wakefield notching a team-high 25 points for the week.

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Hitters

1. Mark McGwire	411
2. Ivan Rodriguez	314
3. Alex Rodriguez	313
4. Chipper Jones	312
5. Ken Griffey	311
6. Andres Galarraga	303
7. Sammy Sosa	299
8. Juan Gonzalez	295
9. Barry Bonds	288
10. Derek Jeter	279

Pitchers

1. Greg Maddux	315
2. Robb Nen	286
3. Curt Schilling	268
4. Tom Gordon	254
5. Chuck Finley	231
6. Ramon Martinez	229
7. Francisco Cordova	224
8. Jeff Shaw	222
9. Andy Ashby	221
10. Pedro Martinez	220

BALLS AND STRIKES

TM You may have noted the unfortunate injury suffered by Redbird ace David Cone when his pitching hand index finger was nipped by his mother's new dog, a Jack terrier, whatever that is. Now, *that's* a shame. Next to Chris "Tinman" Brown sleeping on his ear wrong, I can't imagine a more feeble injury excuse by a player. Suck it up and play ball, David,

TM Is it just me or is anyone else sick to death of those freakin' overtime hockey matches? In the last month it seems like there have been a dozen times that I have been channel-surfing to catch *Baseball Tonight* at 9:30 p.m., only to find a first or second or third or fourth or fifth-round hockey playoff game with the score tied in the third period with 22 seconds to play. You know the rest of the story. Jon Sonders and the goofy Canadian ex-hockey thug spend the next 20 minutes droning on about the excitement of the playoffs, and then the game resumes for a 20-minute overtime period. In what other sport do they have a full period for the overtime session? In baseball, it's inning-by-inning. In basketball, it's five minutes. In football, it's sudden death or 20 yards to score a touchdown or field goal. Only in hockey do they find the need to bore the rest of us silly for 20 more minutes, and only after a stinking 20-minute intermission.

But maybe that's just me.

TM Rube was charitable enough to point out to me that his starting 3rd sacker, Bobby Bonilla, has totaled a minus 11 points for the Redbirds during the past ten games. Ouch. Do any of you fax-getters remember an everyday player malperforming so egregiously over a similar ten-day period? I haven't looked it up yet, but I'll bet ex-Senator Jeff King gave Bobby a run for his money during last summer's O-for-July.

TM Remind us again, U-belly. Why was it that you got SloPay in this league?

TM In case you hadn't noticed, the Tribe team is in a world of hurt. His hitters have the lowest batting average (.265), the fewest runs (317), fewest hits (611), fewest doubles (123), fewest triples (8), next-to-the-fewest RBI (321), fewest walks (212), fewest stolen bases (28), fourth-most errors (52), third-fewest double plays (106), third-fewest catcher wins (18), third-fewest catcher-caught-stealing (8), second-fewest pitching wins (30), fewest saves (15), and no bonus points. On the other hand, the Tribe leads the world in *holds* with 20. So at least they have that going for them.

TM Of course, every cloud has a silver lining. To quote the league sage, the Tribe is finally

"shitty enough" to qualify for that coveted top free agent pick, and Roberto took full advantage of this status on Sunday last by signing the highly-touted Orlando "El Dufus" Hernandez, who may soon be banished to the minors because of the Yankees' pitching depth. But it was fun while it lasted, right, Bob?

TM Speaking of free agent signings, I note that Possum recently signed Omar Olivares, Bob Abreu, and Rickey Henderson. Wow. Look for an abrupt about-face by this sagging team. Also, I see that Possum promoted Pirate pitcher Jose Silva on June 8, just one day after his stellar Sunday outing. Look for another chapter of the old shell game.

TM And speaking of managerial blunders, answer these questions, Rube: 1) Why is Bobby Bonilla still your starting 3rd baseman, even though he has had a ten-day negative string dating well back into May; 2) why was Mark Clark in your minor leagues for his recent 24-point outing; and 3) why do you refuse to promote Chuck McElroy, possibly your best pitcher? Only *you* can tell us.

TM Why do the Skipjacks continue to plummet in the standings? This team has now dropped to 8th place, probably never to recover, despite having the second-highest hitter (Ivan Rodriguez), the third-highest hitter (Alex Rodriguez), the fifteenth-highest hitter (Greg Vaughn), and the second-best starting pitcher (Curt Schilling). Maybe U-belly was correct in his analysis of your lower round draft selections. Just maybe.

BIG MAC'S BIG WEEK

I meant but forgot to include last week the stats on friend McBlunder's mastadonic 551-point performance during Week 9. Here's the skinny:

C Jason Kendall	23
1B Andres Galarraga	29
2B Ray Durham	44
2B Brett Boone	37
3B Edgardo Alfonzo	41
3B Matt Williams	14
SS Rich Aurilio	19
LF Moises Alou	51
LF Cliff Floyd	28
CF Bernie Williams	59
RF Derek Bell	10
S Francisco Cordova	38
S Andy Ashby	35
S Orel Hersheiser	53
S Carlos Perez	22
S Roger Clemens	3
S Randy Johnson	31

MR John Johnstone 6
CL Trevor Hoffman 12
CL Rich Loisell 1

MIKE'S PERFECT DAY

So let's see, among McBlunder's eleven everyday players, with only two bona fide stars (Garraga and Bernie Williams) among them, Stretch's charges scored a total of 354 hitting points (although he only got credit for 350, probably some RBI deductions), an average of more than 32 points per man for the week. With no doubleheaders that week, these players probably averaged six games apiece for the week, meaning that the eleven players averaged more than 5 points per game for the week. A statistical anomaly of incalculable odds.

On the pitching side, McBlunder's six starting pitchers and three relievers totaled 201 points for the week, an average of more than 22 points per man for the week. Astounding, particularly when you consider that McBlunder's two pitching studs, Clemens and Johnson, totaled only 34 points between them, and his two closers, Hoffman and Loisell, totaled only 13 points between them. McBlunder's four certifiably non-stud starters, Cordova, Ashby, Hersheiser and Perez, totaled 148 points between them, an average of 37 points per man for the week.

The take-home point on all of this is that when the Ying and Yang come together, when the Moon is in the Seventh House, when the stars are all aligned, anything can happen. So take heart, all of you, and especially the sullen owners of the Lower Division Redbirds, Reds, Red Sox and Pirates, *it could happen to you, too.*

To close the book on McBlunder's marvelous Week 9, I would be remiss in not pointing out that Stretch's Superlative Seven Day Total led the entire nation during Week 9, as pointed out on the BJFB Leader Board, besting Paul Anderson's Tallahassee Highlanders of the Red Barber League who finished with a paltry 531 points for the week. Bully.

BUT WHAT ABOUT ME, SKIPPER?

Good point, Mouse. *From the Bullpen* would likewise be remiss if we did not point out that Mouse's Bronx Bombers lead the Bill James nation in total pitching points through ten weeks with 1539 points, just ahead of the 1533 points accumulated by Brett MacDonald's Hudson Fall PCBs of the Luis Aparicio League. However, with Bomber hurler David Wells nursing a sore shoulder and moundsmen Irabu, Williams, Tomko and Wakefield reverting to career form a bit, Mouse's hurlers may soon drop down in the overall BJFB standings a bit.

Although none of you have yet accepted my invitation to relive my proudest day as a baseball spectator – I know that several of you have been meaning to ask, but just haven't gotten around to it – I decided nevertheless to dig into the Ernst archives and pull out the box score from Mike Witt's perfectly-pitched game of September 30, 1994. As you will see from the courtesy copy I have enclosed, Mike had a day which rivals Boomer Wells' magic day in the sun. Facing the always-tough Texas Rangers and their potent batting enead of Mickey Rivers (DH), Wayne Tolleson (2B), Gary Ward (LF), Larry Parrish (3B), Pete O'Brien (1B), George Wright (CF), Tommy Dunbar (RF), Donnie Scott (C), Curt Wilkerson (SS), and prolific pinch hitters Bobby Jones and Marv Foley, Witt was able to not only set them down in order but also recorded 10 strikeouts. What a day! And I was there. Really.



See you next week.*

Skipper

* Next Week: Itchie Sounds Off!