



From the Bullpen

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BLUES CHANGE NAME TO ASTROS IN ATTEMPT TO DEFEAT SENATORS

By guest columnist McBlunder*

Not really, but with the trade of underachieving Blues First Round pick Randy Johnson to the Astros, it becomes very apparent that the fortunes of the perennial bottom-feeding Blues are tied very closely with those high-flying boys from Big H. Now isn't that a comforting thought as I slip off every night into a Mc-

* The views of this columnist are not necessarily those of ownership and management of *From the Bullpen*, but are printed here in their entirety and without editorial review. *FTB* will not be responsible for typographical errors, grammatical gaffes, or statements that just plain piss the readership off.

Blunder slumber. As of this writing, my beloved Astros are 67-44 and are dominating the National League Central by a whopping 4½ games. Heh, but with such stars and league favorites Derek Bell and Moises Alou, how can the Blues possibly finish behind the Senators? (Those two are on so many teams' "Never-Ever" lists that they may have to be Blues for the remainder of their careers. I really do appreciate all the positive comments I have heard from fellow league owners congratulating me on these two stellar picks and the blockbuster years they are having. It makes this season all the more gratifying knowing that my baseball acumen is finally being recognized by my peers.) Plus, the Blues' lineup also includes Astro SS Rickey Gutierrez. (Obviously, in my rush to grab pitching on draft day I forgot about the shortstop position, now occupied by Gutierrez and the always-hot Rich Aurelia, both free-agent picks, which were passed up – and with good reason – by all other league members.)

Some other random thoughts (really, all my thoughts are random – these are the ones I have chosen to write down at the behest of the league scribe, Skipper):

™ Being in the hunt for the championship really is fun, if for no other reason, I really think that Skipper has started to read

the box scores for my players as much as his own. Making him sweat is what it is all about, don't you agree, Buser?

™ You really didn't expect this to be as funny as Underbelly's or *The Jiggernaut*, did you? I mean, really. I absolutely busted a gut reading *The Jiggernaut* about Chuck Finley. It really makes your co-workers wonder as you sit in your office laughing your ass off. But I am not buying that stuff about asking permission to use a certain nickname for his wife. Can you really envision that conversation? "Hey, honey, I'd really like your permission to call you a bitch in print to some of my friends. Is that OK?"

™ Speaking of wives, mine has to be about the best to let me go on that All-Star trip. Although it may have had something to do with the fact that I took the kids to Grandma's for four days and left credit cards behind. That, plus she will never know what was paid for tickets and Ernie has been sworn to secrecy. (The possibility of swearing Scott to secrecy was considered unlikely.) Just another reason for keeping my wife away from Ernie and Scott, who spent a portion of the trip trashing the wife of about every high school or other common acquaintance. But don't

worry, guys, they spoke very highly of your wives.

™ The All-Star game. It was great and I once again really appreciated the hospitality of Scott's at Eagle's Nest and Mr. Ernst's engaging company (and driving) on the trans-Nebraska trek. (There is nobody else with whom I would rather experience the migration of the pissing Koreans.) Try this on for a great day: Get up – quick hike in the mountains; a ranch-hand breakfast by a babbling brook on the outdoor patio of a local café; followed by some light reading and staring at beautiful Mount Evans, followed quickly by a nap. Then off to celebrity watching and baseball viewing at wonderful Coors Field (17 rows back, one section over from George Brett, Robin Yount and Andre Dawson), including the acquisition of a rare(?) Beanie Baby to satisfy the kiddies. The game was great and even the Yankee fans in front of us weren't too obnoxious (although the former minor leaguer behind us was). This was topped off by gin-and-tonics and big slabs of Kansas City strip-medium rare at the chop house a few minutes walk from Coors. It really doesn't get any better than that. (Although 47 beers at Milwaukee Co. Stadium came close.)

™ Isn't Matt Williams one of the year's biggest disappointments? I know we all have those guys we were counting on for big years and instead they suck. And I know this is especially hard to swallow from someone who is having big years from the aforementioned Mr. Alou and Mr. Bell, but Randy Johnson really has been a disappointment. Maybe this trade will help his attitude. Plus, pitching in the Astrodome versus the Kingdome can't hurt.

™ Don't you just hate whining about his team by someone in 2nd place (1st in projections)?

™ Don't you just hate someone dismissing the projected totals?

™ Who else benefited by the recent flurry of trades? Maybe the Blues again with Carlos Perez going to the Dodgers. Although they are probably the only team that can score as few runs for him as the Expos. Then they go and blow his first

outing for him by Shaw coughing up the save. Welcome to L.A., Carlos. Why couldn't he have gone to the Yankees? Maybe one of the best trades to help the Blues was Steve Reed to the Indians, where he immediately picked up a cheap reliever and seems to be pitching more than 1/3 of an inning that Dusty typically used him for at S.F. (I know it is just a middle reliever and who really cares about them anyway. But if the Blues don't win this thing, it may be because McBlunder failed to promote Reed and Ligtenberg soon enough, going instead with Loser Loiselle and Johnstone. It also may be because the Blues have no infield and the rest of the team are in a protracted hitting slump.) Another trade that didn't happen was the Braves acquiring a closer, which may mean that Ligtenberg is the man for the rest of the season.

™ Clearly the Cubs* have to be pleased with the trade of Zeile to the Rangers. Anything to get out of Florida. Likewise, the Chiefs are pleased with Stottemyre to the Rangers to pitch for that run-crazy team. Mr. Hurlbut should be happy to have underperforming Grudzielanek (he was great for me last year) taking his attitude to L.A.

™ Who the hell is Matt Mantei and why is he in the starting lineup for the Senators? (Further research reveals that he is the closer of the moment for the Marlins – bet he gets a lot of save opportunities there.)

™ That 47 pitching points for last week must really have stung.

™ Who the hell is someone named Elarton who got the save for Randy Johnson and Houston on Sunday? Maybe RJ will be missing that Mariner bullpen after all.

™ That Garciaparra is a hitting machine. Does he ever taken an O-fer?

™ Does it ever occur to someone that we may have a problem, because we really think that all of this is important? Nah! (Or because I have spent twelve hours neglecting my clients in order to write this? Nah!!!)

™ Why all this talk of the Blues and the Senators? I hear that the talk of the league is that the winner will be the hard-charging Redbirds. Maybe so. Anyway, Buser, I swear I have only worn my Never-Ever Redbirds T-Shirt one time and that was to change the oil in my car.

™ And the Bombers keep quietly hanging in – posting another 400-point week. It could be the Bombers.....Nah.

™ Actually, about a month ago I was predicting that the Chiefs would win it. Then Finley went down (according to Johnny, *really went down*), and I decided that even with playing twelve first basemen, it just wasn't going to be enough.

™ Yep, it is the year of the Blues. (I thought that if I wrote that every year, one year it may come true.) Plus, really, my professional life has been in the crapper this year, and according to the Ernst theory espoused last year, it would be my year.

That's about it from K.C.

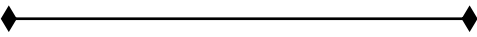
Big Guy and I will report on the quality of the roasted peanuts at Wrigley after we see two games there in late August, one against those wonderful Astros. That will be four games Rick and I will see together this year. The Yankees at K.C. in May and the Twins at K.C. last weekend with Chuck. (Ernie, Big Guy spoke very highly of the recent success of Kenny Rogers. He, as with most league members, is soooo pleased about that turn around.)

If you are going to be in town for the NU-OSU game at Arrowhead October 3, let me know. Big Party at the American Royal B-B-Q the night before.

Be sure to send your shirt size to me before the season ends.

(Hey! Whatever happened to that nice humble McBlunder? That wouldn't make for much fun reading, would it?) Or maybe you just don' know me well enough.

McBlunder



Thanks, McBlunder, great article. But let's not forget the

WEEK 18 STANDINGS

1. Senators	6604
2. Blues	6550
3. Bombers	6411
4. Chiefs	6213
5. Tigers	6209
6. Redbirds	6155
7. Cubs*	6127
8. Skipjacks	6010
9. Red Sox	5894
10. Tribe	5652
11. Reds	5442
12. Pirates	5137

Or the

WEEK 18 TOTALS

1. Tigers	408
2. Bombers	401
(T)Cubs*	401
4. Blues	399
5. Red Sox	372
6. Chiefs	361
7. Skipjacks	345
8. Senators	328
9. Cubs*	320
10. Tribe	295
11. Reds	250
12. Pirates	241

See you next week.

Skipper