



From the Bullpen

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Eastern Nebraska Division
1998 Season

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BLUES CAPTURE 1st, SENATORS APE CHEAP LAWN CHAIRS; RED SOX RALLY TO NEW HEIGHTS; SKIPJACKS BAILING WATER

Riding the hairy neck of one Randall "Big Unit" Johnson, the Blues sizzled during Week 19 to surge past the flagging, weary, gutless Senators, who have collectively bowed their heads to wait for the bullet to the temple. With a mere seven weeks of play to go in the 1998 season, it appears that the Prophecy has come true: the Blues, also known as the *Blastros*, seem destined to have their beleaguered manager's name etched on the Cup.

WEEK 19 STANDINGS

1. Blues	6926
2. Senators	6866
3. Bombers	6776
4. Tigers	6538
5. Cubs*	6463

6. Chiefs	6457
7. Redbirds	6442
8. Red Sox	6236
9. Skipjacks	6214
10. Tribe	5968
11. Reds	5716
12. Pirates	5458

WEEK 19 TOTALS

1. Blues	376
2. Bombers	365
3. Red Sox	342
4. Cubs*	336
5. Tigers	330
6. Pirates	321
7. Tribe	316
8. Redbirds	287
9. Reds	274
10. Senators	262
11. Chiefs	244
12. Skipjacks	204

Top hitting team, week	Tigers, 281
Top pitching team, week	Pirates (must be a misprint) 144
Worst hitting team, week	Senators, 140
Worst pitching team, week	Skipjacks, 33

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Hitters

1. Mark McGwire	630
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2. Alex Rodriguez	592
3. Sammy Sosa	563
4. Ken Griffey	558
5. Vinny Castilla	517
6. Greg Vaughn	514
7. Rafael Palmeiro	512
8. Albert Belle	508
9. Craig Biggio	493
10. Juan Gonzalez	490
11. Moises Alou	498
12. Jim Thome	484
13. Barry Bonds	478
14. Andres Galarraga	474
(T)Derek Jeter	474

(Not a single Senator in the bunch.)

PITCHERS

1. Greg Maddux	571
2. Kevin Brown	479
3. Pedro Martinez	461
4. Robb Nen	451
5. Trevor Hoffman	445
6. Andy Ashby	439
7. Tom Glavine	415
8. Jeff Shaw	412
9. Curt Schilling	407
10. Tom Gordon	487
11. Rick Reed	385
12. Roger Clemens	383
13. John Wetteland	378
14. David Cone	373

(T)Ugueth Urbina

373

AROUND THE HORN

Blues. McBlunder panicked a bit after boldly predicting a Blues title in 1998 in his guest column last week, calling at the 11th hour to try to stop the presses after waking up in a cold sweat, convinced that his newfound bravado would jinx his fortunes. Not to worry, McBlunder, ...

How can the Alou that is a 30/100 man already for the Blues this year be the same Alou that we saw hanging his head and giving up the ghost at Coors Field when he was a member of the Tigers team just a few years ago? Must be the inspiration of playing for McBlunder.

Senators. The Senators hitters have apparently decided to lay down and let the remainder of the Upper Division trample over them this season. We're not giving up just yet, but this may *not* be the season of the Senatros.

Bronx Bombers. Just when you assumed that this team was dead in the water, what with Jim Thome's projected four-six week absence from the lineup and the pitching staff throwing down at their actual ability levels, Mouse's Bombers picked up the pace and forged a 365-point week to creep within 150 of the lead and within 90 of the 2nd-place Senators. Not bad for a guy who can't buy a break.

Tigers. Big Guy's leading hitter (Jose Offerman) and pitcher (Bill Simas) for Week 19 say it all: This team stinks! How on earth are they staying afloat in the Upper Division, what with Big Mac in a horrific funk these days. Even with no attack from the Mac, the Tigers hitters cracked out 281 hitting points for the week, continuing to get unreasonable contributions from Jose Offerman, Matt Stairs, Jeromy Burnitz, Devon White and others. They can't possibly keep it up.

Cubs*. The Cubs* continue to amaze, staying annoyingly in contention even with arguably the worst pitching staff in the history of this league. Actually, it was only arguable until Shamu* picked up Aaron

Sele in the ill-fated Chipper Jones trade. With Sele in the starting lineup, it is now confirmed that the Cubs* do in fact have the worst pitching staff of all time in the Hot Stove League.

Chiefs. Although scoring only a paltry 244 points last week, there are signs that the Chiefs are getting well and could even be a contender, with Edgar, Kent, Caminiti, Bichette and Canseco warming up for a big finish. If B.T. can only figure out the right combination for his starting lineup, he might actually score some points for a change.

Redbirds. *There is no joy in Mudville for the Crimson Nine today.* Despite his continued braggadocio, Rube's charges are fading faster than Underbelly's memories of his inheritance. Other than Albert, ain't much hitting going on with this team these days. And with a few hiccups from David Cone, Bobby Jones and a couple of his other pitchers, things aren't looking so hot at that end either. With a little luck, the Redbirds might stave off the Red Sox for the rest of the season.

Red Sox. How is this team doing it? This same lousy team that we all hated at the start of the year, and which performed miserably during the first fifteen weeks of the season, has been absolutely *en fuego* for the last month. Looking up and down the lineup, I just don't see where it comes from. Certainly not from Jason Schmidt, one-half of the most one-sided trade in league history. Perhaps it's time for a bit of a Red Sox fade.

Skipjacks. Itchie's boys just lumbered through one pitiful week. If not for a furious weekend rally, the Skipjacks were reportedly threatening to not break triple figures. Itchie claims that his woeful 'Jacks had only 50-some points through Friday's games. Only A-Rod's *En Fuego* weekend and a couple of stellar weekend pitching performances allowed the 'Jacks to surge to a still-nauseating 204-point week. How low can he go?

Tribe. Even with Carlos Delgado leading the league hitters with 63 points, and Orlando Hernandez leading the league pitchers with 65 points this week, the Tribe

could muster up only a mediocre 316-point week. What a boring, forgettable team. But don't take it personally, Bob, since I'm not telling you anything you didn't already know. With starting 3rd baseman Gary Gaetti designated for reassignment, and starting left fielder Darin Erstad on the shelf, it won't be getting any better for the Tribe, anytime soon.

Reds. Has Tricko ever been quieter in his life than during the 1998 HSL campaign? Haven't heard a peep out of him since about Week Two. Of course, with performances like Week Nineteen's 274-point output, can you blame the guy for keeping his mouth shut?

Pirates. Led by a resurgent Tim Salmon's 56 points for Week Nineteen, the Pirates posted an almost-respectable total of 321 points for the week, good enough to keep them within shouting distance of the 11th place team. I see that Juan Guzman is in fact in Denny's starting lineup, taking advantage of his rebirth after the trade to the Orioles. But I'm not real clear on why Juan Gonzalez continues to rot away in the Pirates' minor leagues. Didn't he come off the DL, like, a week ago or something? But who am I to question the sagacious SloPay?

Thanks again to McBlunder for last weeks' commendable contribution. Go, Bl..... No, I can't say it.

See you next week.

Skipper