



From the Bullpen

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The Hot Stove League
Eastern Nebraska Division
1998 Season

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BLUES ON CRUISE; BATTLE FOR 2nd PLACE MAKES NORMANDY LAND- ING LOOK LIKE POWDER PUFF DER- BY

With twenty-four weeks in the jar and only two weeks to go in the 1998 Hot Stove League season, McBlunder has opened up such a huge lead (562 points) that he is now on cruise control and savoring his deliciously victorious 1998 campaign. While the owner of the 2nd place team has apparently not yet done the unthinkable and conceded victory to the Blues, it's obviously only a formality at this juncture.

The race for 2nd is another matter, however. Although the Tigers have maintained their 2nd place standing with the help of a 379-point week, their lead over the rest of the field is tenuous, particularly when one looks at the projected point totals. While the Tigers hold a 45-point lead over the 3rd place Senators and a 96-point lead over the 4th place Chiefs, under the projected totals,

the Tigers' lead over the Chiefs is only 1 point, and only 19 points over the Senators.

Looking a bit further down the list, there is only a 227-point difference between the 2nd place Tigers and the 7th place Redbirds, and with two weeks to go, it is still a six-team race for 2nd place. One should certainly not count out the Cubs*, who are currently in 6th place with 8300 points after an eye-popping 431-point week. As they say, anything can happen.

Here are the point totals through 24 weeks:

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 24

1. Blues	9067
2. Tigers	8505
3. Senators	8460
4. Chiefs	8409
5. Bombers	8338
6. Cubs*	8300
7. Redbirds	8278
8. Red Sox	8091
9. Skipjacks	7859
10. Reds	7472
11. Tribe	7258
12. Pirates	6849

WEEK 24 POINT TOTALS

1. Cubs*	431
2. Red Sox	412
3. Reds	401
4. Blues	397
5. Tigers	379
6. Chiefs	378
7. Senators	367
8. Tribe	312
9. Bombers	306
10. Skipjacks	264
11. Redbirds	249
12. Pirates	237

The top hitting team for the week was the Blues with 262 points, led by Cliff Floyd's 46. The Pirates trailed the pack in hitting with 125 points.

The top pitching team for the week was — can this be? — the Cubs*, with 269 pitching points, led by Andy Benes' 62. Trailing the field in pitching was Itchie's squad with a problematic total of 48 points, led by Armando Reynoso's 27.

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Hitters

1. Sammy Sosa	764
2. Mark McGwire	753
3. Alex Rodriguez	715
4. Albert Belle	687
5. Craig Biggio	685
6. Vinny Castilla	684

7. Ken Griffey	681
8. Juan Gonzalez	666
9. Moises Alou	650
10. Chipper Jones	646
11. Barry Bonds	644
12. Greg Vaughn	641
13. Derek Jeter	636
14. Rafael Palmeiro	617
15. Mike Piazza	616

Pitchers

1. Kevin Brown	636
2. Greg Maddux	633
3. Trevor Hoffman	575
4. Pedro Martinez	567
5. Roger Clemens	556
6. Robb Nen	532
7. Randy Johnson	527
8. Curt Schilling	526
9. Tom Glavine	501
10. David Wells	494
11. Tom Gordon	488
12. Jeff Shaw	486
13. Rod Beck	485
14. David Cone	464
15. John Wetteland	459

BALLS AND STRIKES

™ After starting out the week like gangbusters and moving to the cusp of a 2nd place finish, Rube began sounding off to some of his brethren about the likelihood (he wanted to say *certainty*) of the Red-birds finishing in the 2nd position. However, after his 100+ point Labor Day performance, Rube's charges cooled off just a bit, shall we say, limping in with a 249-point performance. Whether Rube can get the fire under his boys rekindled for the final run for the roses is debatable.

™ I saw Shamu* at our insurance defense seminar on Monday of this week. Before the guy could even say hello, he's in my face sounding off about Andy Benes' near No-No. I thought this behavior a bit odd, until I realized that old Shamu* was apparently making a reference to my multiple comments on the wisdom (or lack thereof) of his Chipper Jones-for-Benes-and-Sele trade to the Skipjacks. Well, after a grim start for Sele and Benes on the Cubs* team, the two have been pitching like a House Afire, chalking up multiple pitching points for the Cubs*,

while Chipper has cooled off a bit and dropped down to No. 10 on the hitting leaderboard. Congratulations, Shamu*, you have apparently outfoxed the fox. (Not that the Skipjacks have a need for good pitching these days, or anything.)

™ With the resurgence of the Big Unit and Roger Clemens being the key factors in McBlunder's success in the second-half pennant race, does anyone think that pitching might go early in next year's draft? Like Maddux, Brown, Martinez, Johnson, Clemens and Mussina in Round 1? Don't bet against it, naysayers.

™ The Senators pitchers are now a dead-even 77-and-77, despite a very passable team ERA of 3.69. The Crimson Chirpers, with a near-identical 3.67 ERA, are a collective 87-and-64. The Cubs*, with a nearly embarrassing ERA of 4.17, are a collective 98-and-76, 22 games over .500. Where is the justice in this world?

™ A ponderable. Why didn't I pick up Darryl Hamilton back in late May, stick him in center field, and take his 419 points to date? Instead, I have shuffled betwixt Brian Hunter, Maglio Ordonoz, Shannon Stewart, and a couple of other fish, and have a miserable point production to show from my center fielders. I wouldn't want to hazard a guess as to how many points my starting center fielders have collectively achieved, but I would be shocked if it was more than 300 points.

™ And another thing I'm kicking myself about these days is, why didn't I call SloPay about two months ago and offer him \$20 and a six-pack of Schlitz Malt Liquor for Juan Gonzalez and Shawn Green? They've been in the minors for at least that long, and had I the foresight to do this, I would probably be leading this thing right now.

CEDAR RAPIDS DEATH UNDER INVESTIGATION, SUSPECTED SUICIDE

Cedar Rapids (AP). The world of the Eastern Nebraska Hot Stove League is at a standstill as league members await identification of a white male, appearing to be in his mid-30s, found dead from multiple facial and head wounds, apparently self-inflicted.

Authorities have preliminarily identified the lifeless corpse — found outside a local Iowa Hawkeye watering hole within hours of the Hawkeyes' humiliating defeat by in-state arch rival Iowa State — to be that of Omaha attorney and Hot Stove Leaguer Jim a/k/a Jimmy a/k/a Jamie a/k/a Booobj-zher (supposed to rhyme with Hoosier) a/k/a Rube Buser.

Although authorities have not yet issued confirmation, a source close to the investigation has indicated that an eyewitness — reportedly a waitress at the drinking establishment — saw Buser grow more and more agitated and despondent as he sat on a barstool and consumed pitcher upon pitcher of beer. Although not yet confirmed, the cause of death has been speculated to be a Hawkeye handpuppet with a razor-sharp beak that Buser reportedly used to taunt and terrify non-Hawkeye football fans. According to one anonymous source, "At first, the little guy was just using this little bird puppet to intimidate non-Hawkeye patrons, shoving it in their faces and screaming, 'Go Hawkeyes!' Then, as the Hawkeyes fell further and further behind, and the more beer that he drank, he kept getting angrier and more hostile. Then, for some reason, when they started flashing baseball scores and highlights on the tube near the end of the game, the little guy just snapped, and started clocking himself in the face and head with his handpuppet. We would have liked to have helped him out, sure, but nobody wanted to get close to the crazy little guy."

Let's hope it was a case of mistaken identity.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

As an avid reader of your publication, I must tell you how much I enjoy reading "From the Bullpen." My enjoyment has certainly increased in recent weeks as I read about the weekly exploits of the Kansas City Blues. However, I must take issue with a small portion of Edition No. 23, dated September 3, 1998. Your use of the term fluke to describe some of the draft picks of the Kansas City Blues is inappropriate and does not become such a fine publication. In discussing this with the manager of the Tigers, we concluded that "savvy drafting" is the appropriate term.

Please keep up the good work. And one last thought: Damn, this is fun!!!!!!!

Sincerely yours,

*Jon A. Blongewicz
Manager, Kansas City Blues*

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Good luck during the final push!

Skipper