



From the Bullpen

Official Publication of
The Hot Stove League
Eastern Nebraska Division
1998 Season

Edition No. 28
October 8, 1998

McBLUNDER DEC- LARES '98 BLUES "GREATEST TEAM OF ALL TIME"; LEAGUE IN UPROAR

Stopping just short of declaring himself the all-time greatest HSL manager, 1998 champ Stretch McBlunder produced angry ripples throughout the league by boldly declaring his beloved '98 Blues "arguably the best HSL team of all time." Apparently our league version of Rickey Henderson has had a little too much time to reflect on his dream team during the final weeks of the season, as the Blues coasted to victory. Isn't this the same Blues team that had McBlunder chewing his nails to the first knuckle as late as August, as he waited for the other shoe to drop?

But anyway, reactions around the league have been varied as word has spread of McBlunder's newfound brash bravado and braggadocio, running the gamut from Underbelly's "Big deal, so what, who cares?" to Possum's archaeopteryx-like screech into the phone when he learned of the bold proclamation from Big Guy.

"WHAT?!" screeched Possum when learning of the declaration by McBlunder, loud enough to frighten any blue-haired lady in a three-mile radius. "How can he say that?" demanded a testy Possum. Well, the point is, he did, and now Stretch is reportedly working on an essay to back up his bold words. Once received, it will be distributed around the league, and opportunities given for rebuttal, either in the form of counter-essays or terse letters to *FTB*. Give us your best stuff, Stretch.

THE TEAM THAT McBLUNDER BUILT

As promised, let me now review with you the construction of McBlunder's allegedly greatest-ever team, round by round, piece by piece.

Round: 1

Player: Randy Johnson

Comments: Great, gutsy pick. After stinking during the first half of the season, the trade to the Astros allowed him to get his head on straight and return to dominance. Next year's No. 1 pick overall, maybe?

Round: 2

Player: Roger Clemens

Comments: Again, great pick, but one again in which McBlunder needed profound patience.

Round: 3

Player: Bernie Williams

Comments: Solid pick, likely to move up in draft because of solid PPG ratio.

Round: 4

Player: Trevor Hoffman

Comments: Outstanding pick; best reliever in game despite apparent hillbilly lineage.

Round: 5

Player: Andres Galarraga

Comments: Fabulous pick after Big Cat's performances the preceding two seasons; McBlunder savvy enough not to give in to ballyhoo about statistics plunging because of move to Turner Field.

Round: 6

Player: Matt Williams

Comments: New team, new city, good idea, but bad outcome because of injuries and lackluster performance.

Round: 7

Player: Todd Helton

Comments: Looked like a bust during the first half, came on to have respectable season after solid second half. A round or two early, but nothing to be ashamed of.

Round: 8
Player: Ray Durham

Comments: Matchless draft savvy or flat-out, blind-A luck? McBlunder's not telling.

Round: 9
Player: Moises Alou

Comments: Same as above, times five. (That this was McBlunder's year is underscored by the fact that Moishie returned to career form during the postseason, which counts for nothing in the Hot Stove League, with almost a negligible output on offense for the suddenly flaccid Astros.)

Round: 10
Player: Carlos Perez

Comments: Could this have worked out any better for Stretch? The guy's getting his ass kicked up in Montreal, then they trade his carcass to the Dodgers and he is suddenly the Second Coming of Sandy Koufax. Remarkable.

Round: 11
Player: Jason Kendall
Comments: Nice player, but did Big Mac really draft him knowing that this was to be his career year? Doubtful.

Round: 12
Player: Derek Bell
Comments: See comments above on Alou and Durham. Ditto.

Round: 13
Player: Edgardo Alfonzo
Comments: Come clean on this one, McBlunder. You didn't really expect Garbanzo Bean to muster up 455 points this season, did you, Stretch? And if you say you did, you're lying like a bad rug.

Round: 14
Player: Geronimo Berroa
Comments: McBlunder's *first* bad pick of the draft, fourteen rounds deep. By then (Round 14), by way of comparison, the Tribe drafting mastermind had already hurled in his mess kit four or five times, with Todd Jones, Jeff Fassero, Al Osuna,

Chili Davis, Russ Davis, and the third Davis triplet, Bette Davis.

Round: 15
Player: Shawon Dunston
Comments: Not pretty.

Round: 16
Player: Alan Ashby
Comments: Can you say, "Blind pig finds acorn?"

Round: 17
Player: Johnny Damon
Comments: His stock is rising.

Round: 18
Player: Rich Loiselle
Comments: Not a factor.

Round: 19
Player: Eric Karros
Comments: Worthless unless batting against Greg Maddux.

Round: 20
Player: Francisco Cordova
Comments: Chalked up some points for the Blues.

Round: 21
Player: T. J. Matthews
Comments: *Nada.*

Round: 22
Player: Tim Belcher
Comments: Worthless.

Round: 23
Player: Terry Steinbach
Comments: Soon to be ditched.

Round: 24
Player: Bret Boone
Comments: His 30 bonus points for two home runs and a long foul ball in the same game during the stretch run were more proof that McBlunder's stars were tightly aligned.

Round: 25
Player: Kevin Stocker
Comments: Not a factor.

McBlunder picked so many studs (a/k/a "flashes in pans," a/k/a "flukesters") in the first thirteen rounds, he barely needed to resort to the free agent draft. However, the one time that he did that it made a difference was when taking Kerry Ligtenberg, which should never have happened, since the Senators drafted and reportedly were awarded Ligtenberg in the previous week's draft, until the damned Bill James system went out of kilter and the whole draft had to be canceled. But I'm not bitter.

In sum, McBlunder had one helluva first thirteen rounds, and picked as solid a corps as ever was picked during the first five rounds. However, the Blues could not have had the year that they had without career years from Ray Durham, Moises Alou, Jason Kendall, Derek Bell, Edgardo Alfonzo, Andy Ashby, and Francisco Cordova. But that's not just luck, fellas, that's in-freaking-credible blind-A, bordering-on-witchcraft luck. Hey, if that's what it takes.

Can't wait to see McBlunder's essay for the true skinny on the Blues.

UPDATED STANDINGS

The final, final standings for 1998 – through 27 weeks, were just recently received from Stats, Inc. Here goes:

1. Blues	9787
2. Chiefs	9096
3. Senators	9087
4. Cubs*	9058
5. Redbirds	9035
6. Tigers	8990
7. Bombers	8868
8. Red Sox	8816
9. Skipjacks	8372
10. Tribe	7963
11. Reds	7962
12. Pirates	7357

Including last Monday's playoff game between the Cubs and Giants, the Senators were nosed out by the Chiefs by a stinking nine points. In other words, any one of about a thousand moves that I did or did not make during the season meant the difference between 2nd and 3rd place, and worse, finishing behind Sheik Krause, he

Supplemental Draft

of the untold riches and without a qualm about using them to buy a better draft spot for next year's draft. If only I'd promoted Dwight Gooden one day earlier; or demoted Dave Burba one outing sooner; or promoted J. D. Drew for either hot streak; or demoted him when he hurt his back for any other player; or demoted Percival in favor of Montgomery; or pulled John Valentin before the bitter end of his 0-for-90 streak; and so on and so on and so on. Not that I'm the kind of manager who second-guesses himself.

In any event, if B.T. is willing to live with himself after promoting Wil Heredia well after midnight, in stark contravention of league rules, and then riding Wil's coat-tails to the championship, I say let him eat cake. Whatever that means.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

This just in: Reported by an anonymous source at last Friday's "Bite My Butt" barbecue fest in Kansas City, an elongated Husker fan, obviously operating under a heavy influence of spirits, was heard to say the following to all who would listen:

"I thought I knew happiness when I got married, and then later when my two children were born. But then I won the Hot Stove League. This, this tops them all! Long live the Blues! And I, I am the Greatest Manager of All Time!"

That's our McBlunder.

ENCLOSURES

For your reading pleasure, I enclose a recent article from Tom Boswell regarding the BoSox's annual collapse. Great stuff, as usual. In addition, I am forwarding a husband performance rating test which I recently received from a client, which has nothing to do with baseball per se, but which I found amusing. You may be able to identify with several of the different test categories, as did I. In particular I liked the part about the male species getting credit

for making the bed, but getting zero credit if he forgets to properly place the decorative pillows. Aye yi yi. It's not easy being the man, is it fellas.

Finally, please let me know your availability for the McBlunder McCelebration on Saturday, November 28.

Skipper