



From the Bullpen

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BLUES BACK UP WORDS WITH MORE WORDS; McBLUNDER DELIVERS MANIFESTO

True to his word, McBlunder has produced his essay in support of his position that the 1998 Blues rank as the greatest Hot Stove League team of all time. A copy of his enthusiastic if not compelling ditty is enclosed. Can anyone say *Febold Feboldson*? McBlunder has spent too much time lately re-reading his *Paul Bunyon and his Blue Ox Babe* series lately, I fear.

Not that he doesn't make a few good points. His team did, after all, lay the wood to the rest of the league. And the Blues did, after all, establish a new HSL mark for points in the current era. But *greatest of all time*, McBlunder? That's what Sparky Anderson said about Barbaro Garbey, you understand.

Before I invite the rest of the league to load up on buckshot and fire off a few rounds at Stretch's exposed derriere, allow me to make a couple observations about this "greatest ever" HSL team.

❖ How can anyone say with a straight face that a team with Rickie Gutierrez as the starting shortstop and Brett Boone and Edgardo Alfonso as infield starters is the "greatest of all time," or of *any time*, for that matter? After all, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and this infield has a plethora of weak if not missing links.

❖ Think about this one for a minute. If you were picking the starting outfield for the all-time greatest HSL team, would the names Cliff Floyd, Moises Alou and Derek Bell immediately pop into your minds? Or ever?

❖ If this 1998 Blues team was so damned remarkable, then they must have led the HSL in numerous categories, wouldn't you figure? Well then you figured wrong. The only categories that the Blues led in were team ERA, with an astounding 3.39, and in pitching bonus points, with 139. The Blues did not lead the league in a single offensive category, other than most offensive remarks by a league owner, which McBlunder won in a runaway.

❖ If this juggernaut of a team is so deserving of recognition as an all-time great, why did so many of the 1998 Blues up and

quit in the postseason? Didn't the Big Unit go 0-and-2 against the Padres, with Moises and Derek positively nonproductive during the first round of the playoffs? Wasn't Trevor clever to keep his charade going all season long before showing his true colors in the Series? And what about Bernie Williams? Didn't Bernie bat like a buck-twenty in the postseason, or something like that?

Truly great teams are made of players who also show up for the postseason.

Just a little bit of food for thought. As always, *FTB* is an open forum for your ideas, questions, comments and criticisms. Now that McBlunder has opened the door with his egomaniacal edict, let's see how the rest of you feel about the 1998 Blues team.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A recent offering from Skipper's mailbox:

Dear Skipper,

You either have a large cognitive skills deficiency or missed your entire grade school education. There may be an explanation to "Pettite bait." My diagnosis is ADS (addition deficiency syndrome); a clear lack of cognitive abilities is evidenced by your ramblings.

Your yellow-bellied anonymous friend

Skipper's response:

Huh? I don't get it. Sounds like some sour grapes from a despondent ne'er-do-well, whose beloved school football team continues to get pummeled by other mediocre Big Ten schools. And speaking of addition deficiency syndrome, why the hell do they call it the *Big Ten* anyway? Must be some Iowegans on the league name committee.

NEXT WEEK: Individual leaders, awards ceremony update, and more.

Skipper