

FROM THE BULLPEN



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CHIEFS CHARGE, SENATORS SLIP; REDS AND REDBIRDS SEEING RED

Brethren:

As difficult as it may be to believe, the titanic Senators squad will not go wire-to-wire in 1998. Propelled by sparkling starting pitching from the M&M boys (Martinez and Mussina) and the ageless Chuck Finley, the hard-charging Chiefs chimed in with 421 points for the week, surging past the tepid Senators to take the lead through two weeks by a margin of 78 points. With two weeks of the season in the jar, the leaderboard looks like this:

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 2

1. Chiefs	824
2. Senators	746
3. Red Sox	671
4. Blues	659
5. Tigers	646
6. Bombers	635
7. Skipjacks	613
8. Tribe	563
9. Pirates	544
10. Cubs	537
11. Reds	489
12. Redbirds	432

WEEK 2 TOTALS

1. Chiefs	421
2. Blues	397
3. Red Sox	378
4. Bombers	353
5. Senators	330
6. Tribe	319
7. Skipjacks	290
8. Tigers	276
9. Reds	261
10. Pirates	218
11. Redbirds	218
12. Cubs	217

The top hitting team for the week was the Tigers with 273 points, narrowly besting the Bombers' 272. The top hitting team for the season is the Senators with 540 points, just ahead of the Tigers' 538. The meekest hitting team for the week was the Pirates with 163 points, while for the year the Redbirds bring up the rear in the hitting department with 327 points, mostly on scratch singles and Texas leaguers.

In the pitching department, the Chiefs led the call to arms, producing a total of 189 points during the second week; and lead the league season-to-date with 327 pitching points, just a smidge ahead of the second-best Blues' pitching total of 231. (Hey, Big Guy, tell me again about your theory that pitching *doesn't* count for anything in this league?)

Shifting over to the other end of the spectrum, we see that the mighty Tigers pitching staff scratched and clawed their way to a 4-point week (this is *not* a typo), led by the once-closer Jose "Are you Free" Mesa. For the year, Tigers pitchers have a total of 108 points, 3 more than the pathetic 105-point total of the anemic Redbirds staff.

The top hitter for the week was the Tigers' Ellis Burks with 48 points. The top pitcher for Week 2 was Pedro Martinez of the Chiefs with 57 points, just one point better than Tom Glavine's 56-point week.

For the year, Senator slugger Jose Valentin leads the MVP race with 94 points. The Cy Young of the year is Scratchie's third-round bargain, Curt Schilling, with 120 points year-to-date.

BALLS AND STRIKES

☞ The Chiefs Chuck Finley has the third highest point total for starting pitchers after two weeks with 77 points. If Finley finishes the season in the top 20 pitchers, I'll be amazed.

☞ After Jose Valentin with 94 points, the rest of the Top Ten Hitters to date are: Derek Bell, 86; Ellis Burks, 84; Jeromy Burnitz, 81; David Segui and Dante Bichette, 76 each; Mark McGwire, 73; Bret Boone, 67; Ivan Rodriguez, 65; and Jeff

Kent, 64. Of these ten, three (Burks, Burnitz and McGwire) are Tigers, leading the National League in jacks and ribbies.

☞ Jose's spot at the top of the hitter leaderboard is likely to be short-lived. Unless he puts together another three-HR game, I'm guessing that Big Mac just might pass him up as next week's MVP leader in light of his three-jack performance last night.

☞ And speaking of three-jack performances, who the heck is Lee Stevens, anyway? The advertising exec who worked for Larry Tate in *Bewitched*? Whatever. According to Rube, Stevens' performance is a sign that the Redbirds are on the rebound. Sure, pal. Tell that to Albert Belle, your 2nd-round draft pick whose 0-fer last night flattened out his batting average to a nice, symmetric .111. So much for the value of a hot spring training.

☞ And speaking of Joey, in two weeks of play, this affable fellow has amassed a whopping total of 4 positive points for the flailing Redbirds, which appears to be the lowest output among noninjured HSL regulars. On the pitching side of the equation, it appears that the ace of the Redbirds staff, David Cone, holds the distinction of having the worst point total among all starting pitchers with minus 27 points, trotting Rube's charges backwards at the heroic pace of 13 ½ points per start. Is it possible that the damage to Yankee Stadium was a desperate act of sabotage by an HSL owner desperate to keep Cone from administering more damage? Oh, yes. It's possible.

☞ I see that Skipjack ace Juan Guzman finally got a win last night, gaining back most of the negative points produced thus far for Scratchie's team. Your next Cy Young winner? Not.

☞ What is wrong with Tricky's team? His leading hitter for the week was Jeff Cirillo with 31, and his top hurler was UU with 27 points. Where in the heck are Frank Thomas, Robbie Alomar, Justin Thompson, and Randy Myers? Looks like a long year for Tricky.

SNAFU OF THE CENTURY

By now, most of you are aware of the ugly snafu that has threatened the very existence of the Hot Stove League. During last Sunday's free agent draft, one or more among you failed to follow our express instructions, throwing the entire process into utter chaos, and resulting in such untoward events as Shamu* taking Mark Gardner in the 1st round of the free agent draft, and Rube taking Mike Holtz with his first pick. When Commissioner Drews finally gets to the bottom of this unhappy happening, sanctions may be necessary. Stay tuned.

Skipper