



FROM THE BULLPEN

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Eastern Nebraska Division

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Brethren,

WEEK 1: CHIEFS CHARGE TO LEAD

Paced by solid if not spectacular starting pitching, last year's bridesmaid **Chiefs** served notice that they intend to lay claim to their second HSL title, vaulting to a 411-point first week, good for the top spot in the Hot Stove League standings. This in spite of a horrible 1-for-19 start by his beloved but bloated Sammy "The Steroid" Sosa.

Only 2 points behind at 409 points, **Blues** owner McGloat has served his own sort of notice to fellow owners and managers, to-wit, that he has no plans to go quietly into that good night nor to serve as the village idiot-that-won-the-lottery/whipping boy that some might suggest.

The **Tigers**, possibly poised for a return to their glory years, finished Week 1 with 399 points, good for 3rd place in the league. Led by likely Comeback Player of the Year Frank Thomas, who is second among all hitters with 52 points, and the Big Unit, who leads all pitchers with 60 points, the Tigers are off to their best start in a long while.

Moving down the list, the Itchmeister made the Miracle at Dunkirk look like a nonevent by somehow mustering 379 points (good for 4th place after one week) out of his hapless coterie of clowns. The **Jax** were able to achieve this lofty position – their high-water mark for the year, I am confident – even after staff ace Ashby made like the Medical Arts Building in downtown Omaha, imploding himself on Opening Day. Skipper stands by his earlier prediction on the fate of this group.

Here are the point totals for Week 1, from top to bottom:

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 1

1.	Lincoln Chiefs	411
2.	Kansas City Blues	409
3.	Detroit Tigers	399
4.	Omaha Skipjacks	379
5.	Omaha Senators	367
6.	Lincoln Pirates	361
7.	Lincoln Cubs*	355
8.	Omaha Redbirds	351
9.	Boston Red Sox	336
10.	Omaha Bronx Bombers	324
11.	Sin City Reds	301
12.	Lincoln Tribe	279

Given the devastating injury to their No. 1 draft pick and the frigid start of their other hitters, the **Senators** are pleasantly surprised to be in 5th place. You may have noted that even with the Senators' staff ace and second-round draft pick Tom Glavine off to the worst start of his career (0-and-2, a convenience store ERA (7.11), minus 9 points), the Senators lead the HSL in pitching with 182 points. (I've always said that pitching wins this thing, and this is precisely why my focus was entirely on pitching during the draft.) If Aaron Sele and Brett Saberhagen can both go 25-and-0, as projected, things will be just fine for the Senators come September.

Led by Jeff Kent and Curt Schilling, the Lincoln **Pirates** start the season in the last Upper Division slot. Hot starts by Jeff Kent, Rickey Henderson, Barry Bonds and Raul Mondesi led to a Pirate hitting total of 272 points, third best in the league for the week. On the other side of the coin, the Pirates pitching staff totaled only 89 points for the week, third worst in the league. The Pirates pitchers will have to step it up if this team hopes to contend.

The **Cubs*** lead the Lower Division with 355 points, led by Ed Alfonzo (41 points) and former Senators ace Greg Maddux (38). Not that I regret not taking Maddux in the first over A-Rod, or anything.

With the lukewarm starts of Big Mac and Bags, it's not surprising that the Cubs* are off to such an average start. Look for things to change when the big sticks wake up.

The **Crimson Chirpers** hold down 8th place, on the strength of strong first weeks by Ken Griffey and Justin Hermanson. However, as I look down Buser's roster and try to think of other nice things to say about this team, words escape me. This has to be one of the most vanilla teams of all times. Like I said, not now, *not ever*.

Judging by their first week performance, the **Red Sox** have some holes to patch in the pitching staff. Collectively, the staff garnered a positive 22 points for the week, which is particularly hurtful when one realizes that Mike Timlin, Possum's so-called "closer," had 26 points all by his lonesome. What happened? Between Frank Cordova (minus 7), Kirk Rueter (minus 18), and Joey "The Human Blast Furnace" Hamilton (minus 23 points), the Red Sox had 48 negative pitching points to contend with. Maybe the addition of Masato Yoshii and Sean Bergman can help this staff become respectable, but don't bank on it.

Mouse's **Bombers** start the year in 10th place with 324 points, and terrific starts by Kenny Lofton (47) and Pedro Martinez (43). Not bad for a team that lost one of its star players (Mo) during the second day of the season. Tough break, Mouse. Why do you keep picking those big clumsy guys who fall into the dugout and hurt themselves?

The **Reds** were led by Brian Giles (40) and El Duque (54) toward a disappointing 301-point first week. Hopefully, free agent pickups Wil Cordero, Hideki Irabu and Bernard Gilkey can give this floundering team a shot in the arm.

And that brings us to the **Tribe**. As in "The Hapless Tribe." With 257 hitting points and a mere 22 pitching points, we can easily see where this team is lacking. Not that pitching means anything in this league, or anything. The question I have is just how long will U-belly keep Rick "The Arsonist" Helling in his starting lineup. Through his first two mug-bashings (of many to come),

Helling has notched a total of minus 32. Eww, that hurts.

Perhaps U-belly throttled his team back during the first week so that he could implement his Draft Day-announced strategy of finishing the first week in last place, giving him the rights to the first pick in the supplemental draft, and the opportunity to build his pitching staff in this way. If so, however, then how does one explain his drafting of Woody Williams and Darryl Kile in the first free agent draft? Other than the "dumb as a post" presumption, anyway.

TOP HITTERS

1.	Derek Jeter	54
2.	Frank Thomas	52
3.	Jeff Kent	48
4.	Chili Davis	47
(T)	Kenny Lofton	47
6.	Rickey Henderson	46
(T)	Barry Bonds	46
(T)	Raul Mondesi	46
9.	Jose Offerman	43
10.	Omar Vizquel	42

TOP PITCHERS

1.	Randy Johnson	60
2.	Orlando Hernandez	54
3.	Jason Schmidt	48
(T)	Jeff Shaw	48
5.	Aaron Sele	46
6.	Jeff Brantley	44
7.	Shane Reynolds	43
(T)	Pedro Martinez	43
(T)	Dusty Hermanson	43
10.	Roger Clemens	40

OPENING DAY

Last Monday, April 5, 1999, five hale, hearty and optimistic league members from Omaha and one not-so-observant member from Des Moines traveled to Kansas City for Opening Day, hooking up with McBlunder for the Royals v. Red Sox game. As if by divine intervention, the skies began to clear as we approached Kansas City, and after a short delay, the sun actually broke out during the singing of the National Anthem. What a way to start the new season!

The beer flowed aplenty, polish dogs and salted peanuts were no stranger to our aisle, and all-in-all it was a terrific Opening Day. Thanks to Stretch for lining up tickets.

That will have to be all for now, due to those nagging work commitments.

Next week: St. Louis updates; B.T.'s Top Ten List.

Skipper