



# FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Publication of The Hot Stove League

Eastern Nebraska Division

1999 Season      Edition No. 16

June 30, 1999

## CHIEFS LEAD LEAGUE BY 67 THROUGH 12, IN DANGER OF DROPPING TO 2<sup>ND</sup> OR 3<sup>RD</sup> BY HALF-WAY MARK; SKIPJACKS, LIKE THOMAS DEWEY, PROJECTED AS EASY WINNER; TIGERS AND BLUES RIGHT SHIPS; PIRATES POSITIVELY PUTRID IN WEEK 12<sup>1</sup>

With twelve weeks in the jar and the season soon to be half over, the **Chiefs** cling tenuously to their lead over the **Cubs\*** and **Skipjacks**, giving almost equal ground to both clubs during Week 12 despite posting a respectable total of 360 points for the week. With a twelve-week total of 4459 points, the Chiefs maintain a 67-point lead over the 2<sup>nd</sup>-place **Cubs\***, and a margin of exactly a C-note over the 3<sup>rd</sup>-place **Jax**.

Rounding out the Upper Division are the **Tigers** with 4159, the **Reds** with 4098, and the hitting-mad **Tribe** with 4046.

In the Lower Division, the **Pirates** now occupy 7<sup>th</sup> place with 3877 points, an average night ahead of the **Senators** with 3833, with the **Red Sox** close behind at 3801. Making up the lower quadrant after twelve are the recoiling **Redbirds**, smarting after a 274-point week which brought their total up to 3792, with the **Blues** close behind at 3758 and the **Bombers** a bit further back at 3642.

Here are this week's standings and point totals

### WEEK 12 STANDINGS

1. Chiefs      4459

2. Cubs*	4392
3. Skipjacks	4359
4. Tigers	4159
5. Reds	4098
6. Tribe	4046
7. Pirates	3877
8. Senators	3833
9. Red Sox	3801
10. Redbirds	3792
11. Blues	3758
12. Bombers	3642

### WEEK 12 POINT TOTALS

1. Blues	459
2. Tigers	455
3. Skipjacks	406
4. Cubs*	362
5. Reds	397
6. Bombers	362
7. Chiefs	361
8. Tribe	353
9. Senators	351
10. Redbirds	274
11. Red Sox	260
12. Pirates	217

League MVP of the year – Jeff Bagwell, **Cubs\***      455  
Cy Young of the year – Pedro Martinez, **Bombers**      445

Top hitting team, week – **Blues**      330  
Top hitting team, year – **Tribe**      3209  
Worst hitting team, week – **Red Sox**      178  
Worst hitting team, year – **Bombers**      2181  
Top pitching team, week – **Cubs\***      178  
Top pitching team, year – **Skipjacks**      1786  
Worst pitching team, week – **Pirates**      10  
Worst pitching team, year – **Tribe**      837

### BALLS AND STRIKES

★ Just how Big Guy's team was able to crank out 455 points during Week 12 is beyond me. I look up

<sup>1</sup> Hell of a headline, eh?

and down his roster and don't see any hitter who seems to be red-hot, although Neifi Perez scored 46 points for the week. On the pitching side, the Big Unit pitched a gem in losing to Jumpin' Jimenez (Magpie's hot new catch), but nobody else seems to be tearing up the mound for the **Tigers**. Their leading pitcher was Ryan Rupe with 39 points, who has turned his game around after a very rocky start. My guess is that almost every one of Big Guy's hitters had at least 20 points for the week, resulting in the 309-point hitting outburst.

✦ It is refreshing to see that the **Blues** have their face out of the dirt and are moving the right way in the standings – up. However, as with the **Tigers**, I'm not sure how the Blues put together such a monster (459) week, which included 330 hitting points. While Tino was red-hot with 62 points, nobody else on this roster stands out as having been red-hot during the past week, other than John Jaha, whom McBlunder finally got up into his starting lineup. Must have been a lot of different guys contributing 15 to 25 points to the cause during the week.

✦ I thought that the **Senators** were having a pretty good week, and it wasn't bad, but our 351-point total for Week 12 was only the ninth highest in the league. What does a guy have to do to compete in this league, anyway?

✦ Underbelly's Overachievers continue to amaze. Led by Larry Walker with 45 hitting points, the **Tribe** cracked out 248 hitting points during Week 12. The Tribe still has eight hitters averaging at least 4 points per game, with Jeter and Walker still averaging 5.5 and 5.7 PPG, respectively. The Tribe's team batting average remains at a lusty .307, and our league's version of Rose Ruiz is now projected to give away almost 300 points once he reaches the hitting caps. When that happens, U-Bob will be moonwalking backwards faster than Shamu\* slipping out of the Valentino's buffet line with his backpack stuffed full of piping-hot pizza and lasagna.

✦ Now that my pitchers are finally performing up to par, my hitters are in a deep funk. A-Rod is in the worst slump of his career, batting a buck-sixty-seven over the past ten games. Nothing like seeing your No. 1 draft pick go 0-for-4 with an error and a caught stealing. And by sheer coincidence, Scott Rolen had that exact same nifty statistical package in a game last week – nothing like a minus 5 on the fax sheet to brighten up your morning. Throw in Robbie's coolness, Justice's recent power outage, Kevin Young's blasé existence, and the failed Henry Blanco experi-

ment, and you can see why the **Senatros** are treading water at this time.

✦ Remember Possum's recent Manifesto, in which he attempted to justify his team's collective .306 batting average and in which he whined about how his team never benefits from big point-bonus nights? Since that time, Todd Helton hit for the cycle and scored 108 points for the **Red Sox** in one week, and the Red Sox's collective batting average has gone down faster than Shamu's\* chin over a new plate of spaghetti, sinking to its current level of .295, still nothing to feel bad about. But the point is, Possum was wrong on both counts.

✦ I have a better name for Dave *Mlicki*. Dave *McShitty*. Until he is promoted to the majors, that is. After spanking the **Senators'** major league club in a trifecta of negative-point outings, Mlicki's demotion resulted in a complete game, 1 run, 18-point loss. And since he takes the mound again tonight as a member of the Senators' minor leagues, he is likely to no-hit the Yankees.

✦ Has anybody even heard from McBlunder since the St. Louis trip? Not here, despite repeated e-mails and phone messages. Perhaps the HSLers were a bit tough on him over his quest for injunctive relief and punitive damages against Big Bird, or maybe he's just been too busy on the road taking trial depositions from Bernie the Brewer, the Phillie Phanatic, and the rest of the mascots who are out there terrorizing and endangering Joe Fan.

✦ Not much heard from Mouse recently, either, although the **Bronx Bombers** haven't had much to brag or even talk about. The biggest problem with this team seems to be that it has way too many Angels, with Todd Greene, Mo Vaughn, Randy Velarde and Darin Erstad all in the starting lineup. But Mouse's recent pickups of Todd Hundley and Ed Sprague will surely turn this team around. Hey, who am I to make fun of Ed Sprague? The guy lasts 11 weeks into the free agent draft, but he's kicking Scott Rolen's rear by about a half-a-point per game. Why didn't I pick him up?

✦ Rumors abound that Possum has been calling on Mouse almost every day, trying his darnedest to pry open Mouse's death grip on Pedro Martinez. An anonymous source reported that Possum offered up Mike Piazza and Bernie Williams for Pedro, but that Mouse told Possum he would have to think about it. By the time Mouse gets back to Possum to accept the deal, we

all know it will be Darrin Fletcher (hey, he hit a 3-run jack last night, Mouse) and Eric Davis for Pedro, and Possum will even benevolently throw in Travis Lee, Travis Fryman, Darren Oliver, Chad Ojea, and everyone else in his minor leagues as part of the deal. *Don't do it, Mouse!* But give me a call if you want a real offer.

## HOW DO YOU SPELL RELIEF?

M-I-D-D-L-E, that's how. As unbelievable as it seems, it is the middle relievers who are starting to dominate the pitching in this league. Jeff Zimmerman, Itchie's greaseball pick of the year, is averaging 9.0 PPG in middle relief, with a total of 269 points, good for fourth best among all pitchers, just behind Curt Schilling. The **Senators'** own Scott Williamson is close behind, averaging 8.1 PPG with a total of 251 points, good for eighth place among all pitchers. And Benitez, Seanez, Shuey, Karsay and company are not far behind. Query: When will these MRs be drafted next year?

## L.A. STORY

A personal first: When in Los Angeles week before last, I decided to take in a Dodgers-Pirates game at Chavez Ravine. As I drove into Dodger Stadium, a heavily-pigmented young man approached my vehicle and motioned for me to lower the passenger side window. Since he did not appear to be armed and since there were multiple eyewitnesses nearby, I complied. This nice young man politely inquired as to whether I had any interest in purchasing a Dodgers ticket. Before I even had a chance to respond, he shoved the field box seat ticket at me, asked me (he really did) if I wanted to see a seating chart so I could see for myself where the seat was located (I did), and then proceeded to sell me a primo ducat at face value, even throwing a box seat parking pass into the equation.

A little bit different than some of our past experiences with "crickets with tickets" in Atlanta and at Wrigley (For God's sake, Stretch, the guy's clear across Waveland Avenue with our tickets and our money). My conclusion? The minority youth in the Greater Los Angeles area are being brought up to be polite, respectful and helpful. Or, the Dodgers stink so bad this year that the Brothers are having to market themselves a bit differently.

In any event, the story had a very happy ending. I took my ticket, went inside, and spent an absolutely

beautiful night watching the Pirates beat up on the Dodgers and Carlos Perez (this was the night that Perez went bananas and took a bat to the Dodgers dugout). If there's a better place to see a game on an evening in June, it's not much (better).

## IT HAPPENED

You've all seen the Coors commercial where the goofy guy walks into the bar full of toughs and starts singing, solo and a cappella, the Rocky Mountain High song. Soon, after several menacing stares from other bar patrons, they are all singing together, happily, loudly, and in smooth harmony, the John Denver favorite.

Now allow your imaginations to wander a bit to a smoky casino in a small midwestern river town. A young, prematurely balding Egyptian man with a slight paunch struts through the casino doors, plops his not inconsiderable carriage onto a groaning stool at a blackjack table, and barks at the dealer to fix him up with several stacks of brightly colored chips. The expressionless faces of the rest of the losers at the table glance over as if one at the stranger, silently registering their unanimous disaffection at his presence, and then return to the game at hand. Then, as if invited, the dark stranger begins humming, almost inaudibly at first, and then segues into song, louder and stronger, a scarcely familiar tune:

*"Baby, I'm a want you."*

Just then, a burly prematurely balding man at the opposite end of the table, known to all as "One-Way Tony," chimes in:

*"Baby, I'm a need you."*

And soon the entire table is lustily singing one after another the two hits of David Gates and Bread.

The rest of you may have noticed that David Gates will be appearing soon at Bluffs Run Casino. Now tell me that Itchie and Tony won't be venturing over to Bluffs Run for the Gates concert, followed by a debauchorous night of singing and cavorting at the gaming tables. You can't, can you?

## THE GREATEST 100

Most of you probably have already seen, reviewed and memorized last week's issue of *Baseball Weekly*, which included its listing of the 100 greatest players of

all time. For those of you who missed it, let me know and I will provide a copy for your review, because it's good reading and wonderful grist for discussion around the Hot Stove in wintertime or otherwise.

It's easy to find players on the list to agree and disagree about in terms of their ranking placements. For starters, it's hard to disagree with the Bambino at the top of the chart (although Griffey and/or A-Rod may have something to say about this in another fifteen years), but I don't have to get any farther than the second spot (Gehrig) to find something to disagree about. Although I love Sweet Lou as a player and person, I think that his ranking as the second greatest player of all time has more to do with the way that his career ended and old-fashioned sentiment than objective analysis. Lou's career numbers are what they are: wonderful, but abbreviated because of his terrible disease. If we make an exception for Lou, we make an exception for Kirby Puckett because his career numbers were terrific if projected out to what they likely would have been if his eye disease had not stopped his career short by five-eight years.

I would have no argument with the Iron Horse being in the top ten or possibly even in the top five, but second all-time? Only on sentiment.

Hard to argue with Ted Williams in third, but many people would say that Hank Aaron or Willie Mays belongs ahead of him in the No. 2 hole, if you look at it objectively and weigh career stats against each other. True, the Splendid Splinter lost parts of five or six seasons of his prime to serve our country, but again, are we going to make exceptions for people or are we going to look at career stats? And if all-around baseball ability is to be considered, one has to put the Say Hey Kid ahead of Ted since Teddy Ballgame was an average left-fielder at best, while Willie played center field as well as anyone before or since.

There are many other arguments which could be made, of course, but perhaps the clearest example of how subjective these ratings are is the placement of Rickey Henderson at No. 62. Rickey, for all his faults (and there are many), is so far ahead of the pack in career stolen bases that it's not even funny, and he's currently second on the all-time walk list and closing fast on the Bambino, and second or third on the all-time runs scored list and threatening to move up higher. He also has more lead-off home runs than anyone else in the history of the game, and has driven in plenty of runs for a speedster lead-off man. So how is it that Rickey doesn't even make the top fifty players of all

time, much less the top twenty-five or top ten? Because he's a jive-talking, self-promoting, and not-very-good-looking flake who has played for about twelve different teams, that's why. He's easy to dislike, and easy to discount.

There you have it, Skipper's two cents worth this week on the top 100 list. More opinions to follow. If any of you have your own comments or observations that you would like to share, send them please to Skipper's mailbag, c/o the Skipper.

## **MORE LISTS**

Since it's fashionable these days to produce "all-time" lists, I share with you now a few of my own:

### **SKIPPER'S LIST OF MOST NAUSEATING PLAYERS ON OTHER TEAMS**

**Chiefs** – Mike Lieberthal, Sean Casey

**Cubs\*** - Jay Bell

**Tribe** – Dave Nilsson

**Tigers** – Circus Geek

**Skipjacks** – Tony Fernandez, Mike Bordick, Paul Byrd, Mike Hampton, Jeff Zimmerman

### **SKIPPER'S LIST OF CURRENT SENATOR PLAYERS WHO ARE UNLIKELY TO BE FUTURE SENATOR PLAYERS**

Scott Rolen

U-U

Charles Nagy

Andy Pettitte

Bobby Higginson

### **LIST OF PLAYERS WHO ARE EARNING SKIPPER'S ADMIRATION AND/OR RESPECT**

A-Rod

Maglio

Scotty Williamson

Armando Benitez

### **CURRENT PLAYERS (SENATROS AND OTHERWISE) THAT SKIPPER WOULD LIKE TO SEE GO DOWN WITH PAINFUL, CAREER-**

**THREATENING INJURIES**

Tom Glavine  
Circus Geek  
Itchie's entire starting pitching staff



Next week: SloPay sounds off? We'll see.

See you next week.

Skipper