



# FROM THE BULLPEN

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Eastern Nebraska Division

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## CHIEFS STILL ON TOP AT ALL-STAR BREAK, BUT LEAD CUT TO 43 POINTS; CUBS\* BLAST PAST FLAGGING SKIPJACKS; SURGING REDS THREATEN TO DISPLACE JAX IN FINAL MONEY SPOT

Here we are at the All-Star break in mid July, through fourteen weeks of play, and a little bit past the half-way point of the season. Accordingly, it is a good time to look back at how things have gone thus far in the 1999 HSL season, and then to look ahead to see where things are going. Let's start by taking a look at the standings through and point totals after fourteen weeks of play:

### WEEK 14 STANDINGS

|              |      |
|--------------|------|
| 1. Chiefs    | 5182 |
| 2. Cubs*     | 5139 |
| 3. Skipjacks | 5071 |
| 4. Reds      | 5067 |
| 5. Tigers    | 4835 |
| 6. Tribe     | 4725 |
| 7. Senators  | 4656 |
| 8. Redbirds  | 4579 |
| 9. Pirates   | 4568 |
| 10. Blues    | 4379 |
| 11. Red Sox  | 4216 |
| 12. Bombers  | 4193 |

### WEEK 14 POINT TOTALS

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| 1. Redbirds | 471 |
| 2. Reds     | 466 |
| 3. Cubs*    | 422 |
| 4. Senators | 378 |

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| 5. Tigers     | 357 |
| 6. Chiefs     | 336 |
| 7. Tribe      | 297 |
| 8. Pirates    | 290 |
| 9. Bombers    | 288 |
| 10. Skipjacks | 285 |
| 11. Blues     | 255 |
| 12. Red Sox   | 238 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| League MVP of the year – Jeff Bagwell, <b>Cubs*</b>   | 524 |
| Cy Young of the year – Pedro Martinez, <b>Bombers</b> | 487 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Top hitting team, week – <b>Redbirds</b>      | 305 |
| Worst hitting team, week – <b>Chiefs</b>      | 160 |
| Top pitching team, week – <b>Reds</b>         | 276 |
| Worst pitching team, week – <b>Red Sox</b>    | 19  |
| Top hitter, week – Chipper Jones, <b>Reds</b> | 51  |
| Top pitcher, week – Russ Ortiz, <b>Reds</b>   | 65  |

### INDIVIDUAL LEADERS<sup>1</sup>

#### HITTERS

|                     |           |     |
|---------------------|-----------|-----|
| 1. Jeff Bagwell     | Cubs      | 464 |
| 2. Derek Jeter      | Tribe     | 455 |
| 3. Robby Alomar     | Senators  | 435 |
| 4. Ken Griffey, Jr. | Redbirds  | 428 |
| 5. Larry Walker     | Tribe     | 427 |
| (T) Manny Ramirez   | Blues     | 427 |
| 7. Jay Bell         | Cubs*     | 415 |
| 8. Shawn Green      | Skipjacks | 414 |
| 9. Matt Williams    | Tigers    | 396 |
| 10. Rafael Palmeiro | Reds      | 393 |

#### PITCHERS

|                   |               |     |
|-------------------|---------------|-----|
| 1. Pedro Martinez | Bronx Bombers | 441 |
| 2. Randy Johnson  | Tigers        | 382 |
| 3. Curt Schilling | Pirates       | 359 |
| 4. Jose Lima      | Chiefs        | 314 |
| 5. Jeff Zimmerman | Skipjacks     | 309 |
| 6. Billy Wagner   | Tigers        | 308 |

<sup>1</sup> Not including bonus points.

|                     |           |     |
|---------------------|-----------|-----|
| 7. Mike Hampton     | Skipjacks | 283 |
| 8. Scott Williamson | Senators  | 281 |
| 9. Kevin Millwood   | Redbirds  | 277 |
| 10. Armando Benitez | Senators  | 273 |

## AROUND THE HORN

☞ We'll go in reverse order this week, so that for once, the last will be first and the first will be last. That gets us to the **Bronx Bombers**, who, at 4193, are positioned in the cellar of the league, but steadily gaining ground on the team directly above them, the Red Sox. With a 288-point Week 14 paced by Jeromy Burnitz's 32 points and Steve Woodard's 25, the bottom-dwelling Bombers are not making up ground on many teams, but are now within 23 points of the Possum in 11<sup>th</sup> and within shouting distance of the 10<sup>th</sup>-place **Blues** at 4379. Too bad they don't give points out for Pedro's four strikeouts in the All-Star game, Mouse. What a bravura performance! With twelve weeks to go, it's not likely that the Bombers will finish much higher than 10<sup>th</sup> of 11<sup>th</sup> this year, but at least Mouse will have a smile on his face once every five days when Pedro goes to work.

☞ That brings us to Possum's **Sox**, who currently occupy the penultimate league position with 4216 points, but who are threatening to drop into the cellar for one of the few times in their storied HSL/BJFB career. What happened to this once-proud franchise? With back-to-back disastrous pitching weeks (minus 14 in Week 13, 19 points in Week 14), it looks like the Red Sox management is going to have to rethink their priorities on Draft Day, just like the parent club. It is noteworthy that the Beantowners now have a collective batting average of .293, way down from their much-ballyhooed average of .304 or so that Possum was previously tooting his horn about. While the Red Sox' stock may have bottomed out at its current level, unless management makes some major changes fast, this team is destined for a lower Lower Division finish. *Hold or Sell.*

☞ Just to the north of the **Red Sox** are last year's HSL champions, the **McBlues**, who have them. With yet another disappointing week (255 points), led by Edgar Renteria and Rudy Seanez, the Blues are vying for the league's first ever First-to-Worst death slide. With Smoltzie apparently out for the year, and the Rocket yet to find last year's form, this team looks to be in desperate straits, and unlikely to be able to turn things around anytime soon. Maybe it's sheer coincidence, but doesn't it seem like we heard from old Stretch just a little bit more often last year when his

team was riding high atop the standings? Again, maybe just a coincidence, but that is how I remember things. In any event, it looks like the 1999 season will have to be chalked up as Stretch's summer of discontent, and it will remain to be seen whether Stretch rallies back to contention next year or returns to his previous status as a perennial lower division denizen.

☞ No. 9 are the **Irate Pirates**. Good newsletter, Denny. I have a sister in Lincoln. Pirates win. Oh, wait a minute. That's your line. What's happened to your team? You have the second-best pitching staff (1783 points) – and I'm counting on you to pass up the Skipjacks before August 1, but your hitters are in a bigger funk than your Grecian Formula 44 dealer. With a collective batting average of .268, it's amazing that your team isn't in the more familiar territory of the league cellar. Perhaps taking pitching in the early rounds is not the way to go? There, I've got you thinking, don't I.

Don't know if the buccos can turn things around and make a move for the Upper Division, but I'm betting against it.

☞ That would bring us to the **Redboids**. For the life of me, I don't understand how this old, awful team of free agent leftovers, has-beens and never-will-bes could possibly have pieced together 471 points for the week, so let's take a look at how many points each player had. There was Biggio with 44, Klesko with 42, O'Neill 41, Ripken 34, Grace 32, McGriff 31, Olerud 26, Johnson 22, Griffey 16, Coomer 11, and Barry Larkin 6. I'm sure they'll be able to keep up that pace for the rest of the year. On the pitching side, Wells had 45, Millwood 30, Dahl 28, Avar 25, Mantei 21, Hoffman 20, Wolf 10, Appier 8, and Hermanson minus 4. Wow. The stars were all in alignment for Buser's 'Birds this week.

Now that the All-Star game is past, Buser has shared with me and asked me to share with you his blockbuster trade with Itchie: *Craig Biggio* of the 'Birds for *Andy Ashby* and *Joey McEwing* of the Skipjacks. Huh? This was the blockbuster deal that was supposed to shake the foundation of the league? A non-event, in my book. If anything, I have to question trading a 370-point, 4.3 PPG man for a pitcher who is known to crumble in the second half of the season, and a rookie second baseman who will be playing the second half of the season in steamy St. Louis. (And who, I might add, has the strangest hitting warm-up habit I have ever seen.) But hey, who am I to say. Maybe the Redbirds will rocket all the way up to 7<sup>th</sup>

place with this banner trade. And maybe Shamu\* will refuse seconds someday.

🕒 Next on my list are my own beloved **Senators**, who used a 377-point week on top of the 446 Week 13 to climb to 7<sup>th</sup> place with 4656 points, just a drib and a drab away from the Upper Division. Whether the Senators can continue their upward climb remains to be seen, however, and for now I will simply say I am enjoying the view from 7<sup>th</sup> place much more than the view I was experiencing just a few short weeks ago.

🕒 And then there's the **Tribe**. Ah, God love 'em. Here is a team whose manager is in this league for his pure love of the game – the hitting game, that is. Here is a manager who knows (has come to grips with) that his team has absolutely no chance of winning (since he didn't draft any pitching), and yet Underbelly continues to do bellyflops over his team's delightful, continued hitting prowess.<sup>2</sup> This team's hitting is so good that they can't even make room for Reggie Sanders, and hence had to leave 80 or 90 of his points during a recent ten-day stretch in the minors. Other than Rubella's inability to pull the trigger on Harold Baines, I haven't seen any manager waste points in the minors in such staggering proportions for a long, long time.<sup>3</sup>

In any event, Bob, you just keep on having that good ol' blind hitting fun, even as your team barrels toward eventual *de-cap*-itation. You will find Stretch, Rubella, Mouse and Possum to be good company in the Lower Division.

🕒 In 5<sup>th</sup> place through fourteen are the **Tigers**, who have experienced a resurgence of sorts after a long, painful dry spell. Although Big Guy's hitters aren't exactly tearing it up (the Tigers' top hitter last week was Frank Thomas with 28), his batsmen have been consistent in their contributions, and his pitching staff has been positively dogged in their pursuit of points. As pointed out recently on *Baseball Tonight*, staff ace Randy Johnson has now pitched four games in a row *sans* run support from the Diamondbacks, including Jumpin' Jimenez's no-no a couple of weeks ago, and a near no-no from another pitcher whose name escapes me. R.J. has pitched magnificently in each of these outings, throwing three complete games, as I recall, but going 0-and-2 or 0-and-3 during this stretch, if I have my facts straight. In spite of this, R.J. chalked up 35

<sup>2</sup> Through fourteen weeks, the **Tribe** hitters are batting a collective .307, to the utter amazement of statistical wags and wonks everywhere.

<sup>3</sup> The Joe Randa story, excluded.

positive points for the Tigers during Week 14, solidifying his spot as the No. 2 pitcher in the league and closing ground on No. 1 hurler Pedro. And that, my friends, is why the Big Unit – when healthy – is the best pitching bet in this league. With all of his strikeouts and the very few hits and walks that he gives up, on most days he scores more points with a loss than a **Senator** pitcher with a win.

Whether Big Guy's two other Diamondbacks, Circus Geek and Mattie, can rekindle the fire and have second halves like their first halves remains to be seen, but at a minimum this is what it will take for the Tigers to have any shot at contending for a money finish come September.

🕒 Next on my shopping list is the **Reds**, currently in 4<sup>th</sup> place with 5067 points, an eyelash behind Magpie's idol, Itchie, after the Reds' mind-boggling two-week total of 969 points (503 during Week 13, 466 during Week 14). I don't have time to keep such statistics, but I imagine that Curby's two-week total of 969 has got to be the most prolific fortnight in HSL history.

What a manager! Homophobic, yes, SloPay, but look where it's got him. You won't find any pansies on the Reds roster, no sirree, and now Tricko has something to show for it.

Can the **Reds** contend without Jason Kendall and Canseco, both lost to injuries for the year? No. But allow Magpie to enjoy 4<sup>th</sup> place for awhile before his team starts heading south at a McBlunder-like rate.

🕒 Then there's Itchie. How can a guy who spends three days a week working on his tan (like he needs to) and golf game and the rest of his time watching the Donnie and Marie Show and "The View" have time to manage his team into 3<sup>rd</sup> place? You hit the nail on the head, my friends. There hasn't *been* any management with this team, but merely trades and barrels of blind and undeserved luck. The guy can't even get a fire lit under his alleged superstars (Belle and Thome) but the rest of his squad is playing like it's a benefit game for male pattern baldness and continuing to chalk up unrealistic scores. Until Week 14, that is. During Week 14, the bubble may finally have burst. The party may now be over. The cat may be out of the bag. It may be Katy bar the door. The fat lady may have sung. And every other cliché that you can think of. Even with his recent infusion of new talent via his fleecing of our ignorant Iowegan, this team's true colors may soon appear, and the **Skipjacks** may be on the brink of a

disastrous second half. We can only hope. Or, if Shamu's\* thinking on this subject has any credence, my predictions of potential gloom and doom for the Jax may serve the opposite effect of propelling them to the title.

➤ And now to the **Cubs\***, who rode the wave of a 422-point surge during Week 14 to sail past the **Jax** and back into 2<sup>nd</sup> place with 5139. With Jay Bell hot once again (46 points for Week 14), and the real Greg Maddux finally standing up, is this the team to beat in the 1999 season, managerial inadequacies though they might have? I wouldn't bet against them. After all, a guy should have to carry an asterisk around on his name for only so many years, and Shamu\* has dutifully worn his for almost five years, as we approach the single-greatest moment of his life: The abrupt end of the 1994 season because of the strike, with the **Cubs** in 1<sup>st</sup> place. You go, Shamu\*!

☉ And now biblically speaking, the first shall be last. Somehow, somehow, that good-looking<sup>4</sup>, well-married, brother-in-law of mine has piloted his team to the leader position for the lion's share of the first half of the 1999 HSL campaign, where they remain today with a 14-week total of 5049 points. But what about those nagging point limitations, which threaten to start sucking up **Chief** hitting and pitching points like **Shamu\*** taking down a mound of lasagna? For those of you who don't know my brother-in-law very well, you may think that his team is in a world of hurt; but then you don't know the cunning, facile glob of gray matter that pulsates inside that 7¾ size grape of his. You see, just this week once of B.T.'s shell companies, cleverly known as Art FX of Lincoln, took on a new employee. Underbelly.

That's right. Underbelly is now officially indentured to B.T., having been lured away from his lucrative and satisfying career as Chief Medicine Man<sup>5</sup> at Dorsey Lab, and is now on "special assignment" to B.T. and his South Lincoln production facility. Title, job description, salary and daily work activities are not yet publicly known, but it has been rumored that it took the promise of a 20-hour work week with two smoke

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<sup>4</sup> I hadn't really noticed before, but SloPay has a point. Too bad about that moon-walking hairline, however, a recession which is making Jimmy Carter's time in office look like the Roaring Twenties.

<sup>5</sup> Head Vat Man for Pepto-Bismal.

breaks<sup>6</sup> a day to lure U-belly to make this career change, along with a key to the executive washroom.

Now, I don't like to think of myself as the suspicious type, but one has to wonder whether the *quid pro quo* of Underbelly's soft new job might be the opening up of the **Tribe** coffers to **Chiefs** general management, if a well-negotiated trade or two might help B.T. sidestep the point caps. Maybe I'm discounting Underbelly's integrity just a bit, but if I see an inter-tribal<sup>7</sup> transaction of, say, Mark Loretta, Rondell White and Carlos Perez for Jeter, Walker, Surhoff and Nilsson come across the Bill James radar screen, I'm going to have to assume that Underbelly may have been subjected to a bit of undue influence.

The real question I have is whether B.T. also gains control of the **Irate Pirates** through his corporate buyout of the **Tribe**. Could be a juggernaut in the works.

I hate to say it, brother-in-law of mine, but you're gonna need help to keep your leaky craft afloat. As you are no doubt aware, your team is currently projected to finish 4<sup>th</sup> once the caps have their way with you. When added to the undeniable observation that Lieberthal, Casey, Lima and Hernandez can't possibly replicate their first halves in the second half, I can see why you made the desperate hire that you did.

## SAME TIME, LAST YEAR

Last year at this time, through 14 weeks, my beloved **Senators** were leading all teams with 5172 points, and seemingly destined for glory. The **Bomb-ers** were in 2<sup>nd</sup> place at this time last year with 5099 points, followed by a third-place **Blues** with 4979, the 4<sup>th</sup> place **Tigers** with 4893, and the 5<sup>th</sup> place **Chiefs** with 4880. The **Pirates** held down the bottom spot at this juncture last year with 4880.

Remarkable. Only a ten-point difference between the leader last year and the leader this year, and a similar log jam among the top several contenders. As Stretch will fondly recall, it was just about this time last year when he began his marvelous gallop to the front of the pack, walking away with the HSL crown and establishing a new league mark along the way. So

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<sup>6</sup> Bob doesn't smoke, he just wants the breaks. A throwback to his railroad days.

<sup>7</sup> **Chiefs** → **Tribe**, get it?

you see, fellas, it's still a wide-open race, and anything can happen.

## BALLS AND STRIKES

☑ How Magpie's team got and stayed so hot is beyond me. I look at this team roster and I think, "Hmmm. Average hitting. Lousy and no-name pitching. Not much of a threat to anyone." Then I see that his hitters are batting a collective .301 and that his pitching staff has appeared out of nowhere to post a respectable 1664 points through fourteen weeks. But really, with Russ Ortiz and Tim Hudson as his pitching mainstays, and with Kendall and Canseco on the shelf for the year, is this the team that is actually capable of competing during the stretch run? Maybe if he catches a little lightning<sup>8</sup> in a bottle.

☑ While I enjoyed every word of the *Irate Pirate*, as I re-read them, I am starting to wonder about Brother SloPay just a bit. First he comments about B.T.'s good looks, and then he upbraids Tricky about his homophobia and puts out a thinly-veiled invitation to be roomies, if not bunkies, with Magpie on next year's trip. If I didn't know better, I'd say that you seem to be trying to come out of the closet, Denny. If I'm right on this, I've got a number for you to call in Detroit next time you're in town.

☑ Not that I'd ever try to make another manager look bad, but I couldn't help noticing that when U-belly finally got around to promoting Reggie Sanders on July 8, it was right after he had concluded a spectacular twelve-day tear that is unrivaled in the annals of the HSL farm system. Beginning with June 26, these were Reggie's point totals for the next twelve days: 8.5-2-4.5-6-17.5-4-17-17-10.5-4.5-12.5-1. A total of 105 points in twelve days. Then he was promoted, and on the thirteenth day he rested. And then he scored a point and one half on Saturday, and then along came the All-Star break. As Bob is fond of saying, *Timing is everything*.

☑ Not wanting to be accused of piling on, I won't go into the subject of how many points Jose Hernandez scored for the **Tribe's** minor league system during the Sanders *en fuego* session. Jeez, Bob, did you forget how to read a box score?

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<sup>8</sup> As U-belly would put it. In other words, unless he trades for guys like Chuck Finley, Dmitri Young, Carlos Delgado, etc.

☑ And speaking of reading box scores, I was listening to the insufferable voice of the Royals – Denny Matthews – the other day<sup>9</sup> on a recent drive home from somewhere. As he was spewing out drivel during a recent rain delay broadcast, he was asked by his broadcast partner whether he still reads the box scores. To my jaw-dropping amazement, the clown confessed that he *does not* read the box scores in the paper every day anymore, lamely excusing himself because there are "too many of them." Gosh, Denny, you just can't find that extra twenty minutes a day between scrubbing your dentures and slipping into your *Depends*? You are a disgrace to your profession, your team, and your city. I will never again listen to you on the radio.

☑ What gives with the **Red Sox** these days? Or specifically, why are they so darned bad? Looking at their point totals for the last week or so before the All-Star break, one can see why the Red Sox have been plummeting in the standings. On the hitting side, every one of Possum's outfielders (Chili Davis, Rusty Greer, Brady Anderson, Bernie Williams, Bob Abreu) have been ice cold, as has Todd Helton. Piazza, Will Clark and Troy Glaus are the only hitters who did any scoring for the Red Sox during Week 14. On the pitching side, Coney was negative for the last week, Darrin Oliver scored positively but in the minors, and Chan Ho Park bunnyhopped backward, as did middle relievers Mike Williams and Paul Shue. Only Frank Cordova and Yoshii Yo Yo Ma scored any positive pitching points for the Red Sox that are worth talking about. But buck up, Possum. It looks like there's only one direction that your team can go, and that is up.

☑ I absolutely cannot believe all of the free agent activity that is still going on even after fourteen weeks of play. I put in for Al Martin of the **Pirates** last week – *Al Martin*, for Pete's sake – and assumed that I got him, as anyone would, only to find out that Tricky picked him up ahead of me. Why, you might ask? Because Magpie figured out that the guy is scoring at a clip of 3.8 points a game, and that's better than plenty of folks on both his and my roster, that's why.

And then this week I got aced out again, this time by that beady-eyed Iowegan, who snapped up Chris Singleton of the White Sox because of his superior draft position. Just look at this week's transaction report: Buser picked up two new players; the **Tigers** signed three new stiffies; the **Senators** signed one; the **Blues** picked up two new bodies; the **Chiefs** have three

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<sup>9</sup> What choice do I have? It's the only baseball game I can get on my car radio.

new players, including a savvy pickup of Armando Reynoso, who has been ignored by all for too long; the **Tribe** picked up Jose Jimenez; the **Jax** picked up Joe (any relation to Willie?) Mays and Mark Portugal (again, Itchie?); the **Bombers** picked up Bob Wickman for the second or third time; and the **Reds** signed **Senatro** castoff Geoff Jenkins. Did I leave anyone out? Unless I'm mistaken, only the **Cubs\*** and **Blues** stood pat with their teams last week, and only because Shamu\* is too cheap and McBlunder too busy scheming to aggravate his poor next-door-neighbor to join in the fun. Give it a rest, already.

## THE TRIP

Since Itchie was our official recording secretary of events on this year's Trip to St. Louis, I completely forgot to include my annual (for the most part) recap of cities/ballparks visited on sanctioned HSL trips. So here you are:

| Year | Dates    | City      | Stadium         | Games               |
|------|----------|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1985 | 8/3-4    | K.C.      | Royals Stadium  | 2-Royals/Red Sox    |
| 1986 | 8/16-17  | K.C.      | Royals Stadium  | 2-Royals/Yankees    |
| 1987 | 10/4     | K.C.      | Royals Stadium  | 1-Royals/Twins      |
| 1988 | 8/13-14  | Chicago   | Wrigley Field   | 2-Cubs/Cards        |
| 1989 | 7/20     | K.C.      | Royals Stadium  | 1-Royals/Indians    |
|      | 7/21-22  | Milwauk.  | County Stadium  | 2-Brewers/Twins     |
|      | 7/24     | Chicago   | Wrigley Field   | 1-Cubs/Giants       |
| 1990 | 7/4      | K.C.      | Royals Stadium  | 1-Royals/Brewers    |
|      | 7/5      | Arlington | Arlington Stad. | 1-Rangers/Orioles   |
|      | 7/6-7    | Arlington | Arlington Stad. | 1-Rangers/Red Sox   |
| 1991 | 8/31-9/1 | Chicago   | New Comiskey    | 2-White Sox/Indians |
| 1992 | 6/11     | Toronto   | Sky Dome        | 1-Blue Jays/Red Sox |
|      | 6/12     | Cleveland | Cleveland Stad. | 1-Indians/Yankees   |
|      | 6/13     | Detroit   | Tiger Stadium   | 2-Tigers/Orioles    |
| 1993 | 8/5      | Anaheim   | The Big A       | 1-Angels/Royals     |
|      | 8/6      | San D.    | Jack Murphy     | 2-Padres/Rockies    |
|      | 8/7      | L.A.      | Chavez Ravine   | 1-Reds/Dodgers      |
| 1994 | 7/7      | K.C.      | Kaufman Stad.   | 1-Royals/Brewers    |
|      | 7/8      | Boston    | Fenway Park     | 1-Mariners/Red Sox  |
|      | 7/9      | N.Y.      | Yankee Stad.    | 1-Angels/Yankees    |
|      | 7/10     | Balt.     | Camden Yards    | 1/Orioles/Athletics |
| 1995 | 7/7-9    | Denver    | Coors Field     | 3-Rockies/Expos     |
| 1996 | 6/21-22  | Cleveland | Jacobs Field    | 2-Indians/Yankees   |
|      | 6/23     | Detroit   | Tiger Stadium   | 1-Tigers/Twins      |
| 1997 | 6/28-29  | Atlanta   | Turner Field    | 2-Phillies/Braves   |
| 1998 | 7/7      | Denver    | Coors Field     | All-Star Game       |
| 1999 | 5/15-16  | St. Louis | Busch Stadium   | 2-Dodgers/Cards     |

Wow. A lot of great trips, a lot of great ballparks, a lot of ballpark food consumed by Shamu\*, and a whole lot of John Barleycorn consumed by many, not the least of which by our Egyptian ambassador.

So where do we go next year? You will recall that there are four new ballparks opening next year: San Francisco, Houston, Milwaukee, and Detroit. Any of these venues would be just dandy by my way of thinking, or how great would a trip to Seattle to see brand new Safeco Field be? Our options are limitless. Any volunteers to spearhead the organizing of next year's event? Let me know.

## THIS JUST IN

As reported by B.T. late last evening, a blockbuster trade between the **Chiefs** and the **Tigers**. The Chiefs are now the proud owner of one Randy Johnson, mentioned above, while the Tigers now have Sammy Sosa and Jeff Shaw in their stable. Wow! Consider the league foundation rocked. Looks like a pretty square deal at this point in time, but *FTB* will keep an eye on things and let you know how this trade pans out for the participants.

## THIS JUST IN II

A new member of the **Cubs\*** baseball family. On July 4, 1999, Rachel Ann Sinclair (6 lbs. 3 oz.) entered the world of **Shamu\*** and Jan Sinclair, and the **Cubs\*** clubhouse will never be the same. Congratulations, Jan and Shamu\*.

Enough for one week. Good luck in the second half.

Skipper