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# FROM THE BULLPEN

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Dear Baseball Brethren:

Misery loves company, so let me know commiserate with you. After last night's Game 4 completing the Yankees' sweep of the gutless Braves – sorry, Linda, but I have to call a spade a spade – the stark realization hit me that the baseball season is now completely over, and we are all faced with a three-and-one-half month void in our lives, which unfortunately coincides with our pleasant Nebraska winters. Ouch. I don't even like to think about it.

Some of you may be able to fill this void, at least partially, by watching college football, pro football, pro basketball, pro hockey, or pro golf; or by participating in various and sundry charitable and volunteer-type endeavors, but as for me, I feel like crawling into a dark closet, assuming the Jim Bakker fetal position, and setting the alarm for mid-February.

I know, I know – it's not that bad, and we can all get through this if we stick together. But let me wallow in my own gloom this morning after the final game of the 1999 season, at least for today. I promise I will have my wife hide all the sharp objects in the house, as you all should do as well.

Last evening Big Guy, Itchie, One-Way Tony and I gathered at the new West Center watering hole called Daddy O'Quinlan's, or some such name, to watch the final game. Tony lobbied for entrance into the Hot Stove League via the concomitant expulsion of the never-present owner of the Transactions Suspended franchise, the elusive, unctuous and prevaricating Possum, whose latest fabrication consisted of his bold-faced lie that he could not attend our little gathering because of an out-of-town business endeavor. That doesn't cut it, Possum. Next time try U-belly's approach that you got lost en route. It's neat, it's clean, and virtually unverifiable.

In any event, Tony pointed out that he has attended many more league functions than Possum, and that even though he does not have an HSL franchise yet, he has spent just as much time in 1<sup>st</sup> place as Possum's franchise during the Live Ball Era. It was moved and seconded during this meeting to make Tony an associate member for the year 2000 – subject to affirmation by the body whole when we get together for our winter meeting – while Possum is on probation because of his: (1) 11<sup>th</sup>-place finish; (2) tarnishing the good name of our league by stiffing Bill James on transaction fees and setting a league record for time spent on "Transactions Suspended" status; (3) avoiding all league functions except The Draft since the late 1980s; (4) pathological prevarications; and (5) various and sundry slams and slights of his fellow HSLers and other crimes against humanity.

## **THE DRAFT**

Speaking of the Draft, from my conversations with many of you, I can see that I am not alone in already projecting some of next year's draft picks. From my joint and several conversations with other league members, it appears that the consensus seems to be that the draft will go Pedro, Big Unit, Kevin Brown, and then shortstop, shortstop, shortstop. As far as I'm concerned, it's basically over at that point and the rest of us will have to take what's left. Whether I will then take Piazza (maybe), I-Rod (maybe), Alomar (doubtful), McGwire (doubtful), or the fourth pitcher in the first round, remains to be seen. Maybe even Chipper Jones warrants the No. 7 overall pick in the draft, but I'm reluctant to put a dagger through the heart of his career by taking him in the first round, given my luck with Tom Glavine this year and Greg Maddux last year. By the way, have I mentioned to any of you that I loathe Tom Glavine? Who was the clown who commented during the Series that Glavine is building up Hall-of-Fame numbers? Give me a vote on that one, please.

Anyhow, we'll have to plan on a mock draft or two during the coming winter months, to help lift the gloom of another baseball-less Nebraska winter. The winter meeting will be as good a time as any to start.

Speaking of the winter meeting, I'm still waiting to hear back from Itchie as to when he expects to receive his Skipjacks apparel from the Art FX factory in Malaysia, so we can get on with the unpleasant business of paying tribute to the Itchmeister and seeing his name inscribed upon The Cup for a third time.

Back to the Draft. While some of you may believe that those decisions that are made during the first five rounds of the Draft are all that really count in terms of one's likelihood of having a successful season, in truth nothing could be further from the truth. Last year is a crystal clear example.

During the first five rounds of last year's Draft, the following players were drafted, and scored the totals indicated below:

| <u>BLUES</u> |               |               |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>   | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1            | R. Clemens    | 276           |
| 2            | J. Smoltz     | 408           |
| 3            | M. Ramirez    | 769           |
| 4            | C. Knoblauch  | 564           |
| 5            | S. Stewart    | 478           |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |               | <b>2495</b>   |

| <u>CHIEFS</u> |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>    | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1             | K. Brown      | 586           |
| 2             | M. Mussina    | 425           |
| 3             | S. Sosa       | 734           |
| 4             | J. Shaw       | 393           |
| 5             | R. Durham     | 580           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |               | <b>2718</b>   |

| <u>SENATORS</u> |               |               |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>      | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1               | A. Rodriguez  | 666           |
| 2               | T. Glavine    | 324           |
| 3               | S. Rolen      | 428           |
| 4               | R. Alomar     | 797           |
| 5               | U. Urbina     | 462           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    |               | <b>2677</b>   |

| <u>CUBS</u> |               |               |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>  | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1           | G. Maddux     | 399           |
| 2           | M. McGwire    | 758           |
| 3           | J. Bagwell    | 771           |

|              |           |             |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 4            | R. Nen    | 380         |
| 5            | T. Salmon | 344         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |           | <b>2652</b> |

| <u>REDBIRDS</u> |               |               |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>      | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1               | K. Griffey    | 704           |
| 2               | C. Biggio     | 662           |
| 3               | T. Hoffman    | 474           |
| 4               | B. Larkin     | 573           |
| 5               | D. Wells      | 342           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    |               | <b>2755</b>   |

| <u>TIGERS</u> |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>    | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1             | R. Johnson    | 738           |
| 2             | I. Rodriguez  | 738           |
| 3             | F. Thomas     | 453           |
| 4             | M. Rivera     | 526           |
| 5             | J.D. Drew     | 288           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |               | <b>2743</b>   |

| <u>BOMBERS</u> |               |               |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>     | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1              | P. Martinez   | 724           |
| 2              | A. Leiter     | 318           |
| 3              | M. Vaughn     | 477           |
| 4              | T. Percival   | 352           |
| 5              | D. Erstad     | 355           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |               | <b>2226</b>   |

| <u>RED SOX</u> |               |               |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>     | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1              | M. Piazza     | 669           |
| 2              | D. Cone       | 372           |
| 3              | B. Williams   | 676           |
| 4              | C. H. Park    | 226           |
| 5              | Rusty Greer   | 646           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |               | <b>2507</b>   |

| <u>SKIPJACKS</u> |               |               |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>       | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1                | A. Belle      | 667           |
| 2                | V. Castilla   | 505           |
| 3                | J. Thome      | 585           |
| 4                | J. Lopez      | 264           |
| 5                | T. Gordon     | 99            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     |               | <b>2120</b>   |

| <u>TRIBE</u> |               |               |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Rnd</u>   | <u>Player</u> | <u>Points</u> |
| 1            | D. Jeter      | 790           |
| 2            | L. Walker     | 661           |
| 3            | V. Guerrero   | 655           |
| 4            | E. Martinez   | 580           |

5 M. Jackson 415  
**TOTAL 3101**

See ya.

| <b>REDS</b> |               |               |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Rnd</b>  | <b>Player</b> | <b>Points</b> |
| 1           | N. Garciparra | 678           |
| 2           | C. Jones      | 744           |
| 3           | O. Hernandez  | 392           |
| 4           | J. Kendall    | 360           |
| 5           | J. Wetteland  | 433           |
|             | <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>2607</b>   |

Skipper

| <b>PIRATES</b> |               |               |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Rnd</b>     | <b>Player</b> | <b>Points</b> |
| 1              | C. Schilling  | 394           |
| 2              | B. Bonds      | 471           |
| 3              | J. Gonzalez   | 657           |
| 4              | C. Delgado    | 624           |
| 5              | J. Kent       | 577           |
|                | <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>2723</b>   |

At the end of five rounds, the leaderboard would have read as:

|     | <b>Team</b> | <b>Actual Place of Finish</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 1.  | Tribe       | 8                             |
| 2.  | Redbirds    | 9                             |
| 3.  | Tigers      | 4                             |
| 4.  | Pirates     | 6                             |
| 5.  | Chiefs      | 2                             |
| 6.  | Senators    | 7                             |
| 7.  | Cubs*       | 3                             |
| 8.  | Reds        | 5                             |
| 9.  | Red Sox     | 11                            |
| 10. | Blues       | 10                            |
| 11. | Bombers     | 12                            |
| 12. | Skipjacks   | 1                             |

Amazing. Even though Itchie had an absolutely horrible first five rounds of the Draft, picking players who scored only 2120 points, he went out and won this thing in the later rounds and through the free agent draft.

Conversely, U-belly had far and away the best five rounds of the draft, at least in terms of gross points scored, with 3101. Of course, he failed to take a single starting pitcher during the first five rounds, and flatly ignored the cardinal rule of the league that pitching is everything in this business, and finished in 8<sup>th</sup>.

Lies, damn lies, and statistics. Ain't that the truth.