



FROM THE BULLPEN

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Eastern Nebraska Division

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Brethren:

It's February! The dreaded Nebraska month of January is behind us, and soon, ever soon, we will hear uttered those beautiful words, "*Pitchers and catchers report.*" What more could a fella ask for?

Well, fifteen minutes with Pamela Sue Anderson, sure, but let's be realistic, boys.¹²³

DRAFT DAY MARCH 18—4 p.m.

You may now indelibly inscribe March 18, 4 to 9 p.m. on your social calendars. Through begging, whining, arm-twisting, and groveling, I have been successful in persuading all of you to revolve your lives around my schedule and move the Draft from its customary 1 p.m. start time to the later 4 p.m. commencement time. Thank you. Gratzi. Mucho gracias. Your flexibility is appreciated.⁴

This will be the sixteenth season of competition in the Hot Stove League, and the eighth in our current configuration of twelve teams under the Bill James system. While there has been a bit of cocktail party chatter about expanding the revered HSL to fifteen teams, this issue

¹ Or in Shamu's* case, Sunday box scores, a fresh tin of Copenhagen, and 45 minutes in a dead-bolted water closet.

² Or in Itchie's case, a Saturday afternoon of computer Yahtzee with a debilitated George Harrison, capped off by a fresh bird (pheasant) to stuff in his basement taxidermy shop.

³ Or in U-belly's case, an hour on the practice range with his street sweeper, followed by an evening visit to the interactive spelling bee web site.

⁴ On the other hand, I guess you pretty much have to live with my schedule if you want to hold the Draft at the Gaines Mullen War Room, since I alone hold the keys to the use of these spacious digs. Since we have held the Draft at the Gaines Mullen War Room for the past fourteen years, it just wouldn't be the same to have it anywhere else.

has been tabled for now, and the league will continue on as a twelve-team league for the year 2000 season.

MOCK DRAFT

Possum is reportedly lining up a luncheon for the second of many off-season mock drafts. For those of you who will not be able to make it to the Big O for tea and crumpets with O-Possum, we will be sure to publish the next mock draft for the benefit of all involved. Rumors swirl that our exalted Defending Champion, Brother Itchie⁵ is reportedly wavering on Pedro and leaning toward Vinny Castilla as the top pick in the Draft, so concerned is he that Vinny's career will be reborn on someone else's roster. R.J. and Kevin Brown still seem likely to go in the top three, but will Derek Jeeter's bloated contract put him on the Danny Tartabull road-to-ruin, and jeopardize his likely pick in the No. 4 hole?

These, and many more questions, will soon be answered in the fullness of time.

OPENING DAY

The rest of you will be pleased to know that your league will be well-represented on Opening Day. Big Guy, Shamu* and possibly Itchie, if he ever gets his house in order, will be joining the undersigned for a road trip to Seattle for Opening Day at Safeco Field. Looks like we will be seeing Pedro on the mound for Opening Day for the second year in a row, and with any luck at all, we can watch him dig Itchie an Opening Day hole not unlike Andy Ashby's malperformance last season.

Turns out that Stretch has a law school buddy who works for one of the minority owners in the Mariner or-

⁵ You know, the guy with the perpetual "I'm a lot smarter than you, and I know it, and you know it" look in his eye, sporting the Skipjacks championship blue blazer that would put the Rear Admiral of Her Majesty's Royal Navy to shame.

ganization, and that he may be able to pull a few strings and get us tickets for the game. Not that our expectations are high, Stretch, but the luxury box next to Bill Gates would be nice, if available, and would you see if the guy can get us dugout passes to visit A-Rod and Junior before and after the game?⁶ Anyway, if any of you fellas want to join us for what promises to be a splendid little outing, see me. Soon.

THE TRIP

Speaking of great trips, we are working on lining one up for the 2000 Hot Stove League season, although Hayden is doing his best to put a crimp in these plans.

In any event, we have identified several weekends throughout the summer that would provide opportunities to combine Houston and Dallas on a single trip, which would allow us to set foot in the new Houston ballpark during its inaugural year, and would allow most league members to view The Ballpark in Arlington for the first time; or in the alternative, a trip which would combine Detroit with Cleveland and/or Toronto in a single swing (can you even imagine reliving the infamous “yak ride to Cleveland” junket of 1992?).

⁶ I guess we also have to keep in mind that the last time that McBlunder was in charge of tickets, he was about a block and a half away from a scalper named Leroy in Chicago who had a fistful of ducats in one hand and a fistful of *our* money in the other.

In any event, here are some of the potential dates for The Trip:

April 21-23	Twins at Texas; Padres at Houston
April 28-30	White Sox at Detroit; Red Sox at Cleveland
May 12-14	Yankees at Detroit, Royals at Cleveland
June 2-4	Diamondbacks at Texas; Cubs at Houston
June 9-11	St. Louis at Detroit; Montreal at Toronto; Cincinnati at Cleveland
June 23-25	Tampa Bay at Texas; SF at Houston
July 7-9	Padres at Texas; Royals at Houston
July 14-16	Houston/Cincinnati at Detroit; Phillies/Yankees at Toronto
July 21-23	Royals at Detroit; Baltimore at Toronto
Sept. 15-17	Pirates at Texas; Royals at Houston

Wow. Some pretty interesting match-ups.

Please do us this favor and, using the enclosed card, indicate your availability (with an X) and ranking (1-5) for each of these potential trip weekends and sites. Please try to get these back to me in the next week to two weeks, if possible.

It won't be long now, my friends, it won't be long.

All my best.

Slim Whitman

Oops. That was from another life.

Best regards.

Skipper