
THE JIGGERNAUT

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From the Bullpen

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**HOUSTON DEVASTATED!
CUBS ELIMINATED!
TONY INEBRIATED!
CHIEFS REJUVENATED!
WAHOO HITTERS MAKE US NAUSEATED!
BUSER CELEBRATED!
CHICKEN EMANCIPATED!
SKIPPY'S SELF OPINION MUCH INFLATED!**

Before I get into details surrounding the annual league trip, I'll just say a couple words in response to Skippy's last Bullpen and his rebuttal to my innocuous request for a few specifics regarding the itinerary of the trip, and I'll let it go at that. Eighth place. That's right, eighth place. Manage your team with a little more attention to DETAIL, Skippy, and you wouldn't be 891 points behind me, hanging on in desperation to avoid your freefall toward the league dungeon. So kiss my ass and pay attention, pally. I'm gonna tell ya the way things really are, cause there ain't nothin that Itchie don't know.

¹ aka The "Fuehrer of Fret."

The TRIP

As far as I can remember, a lot has happened in the past couple days. Houston will never be the same after six league members and one alternate blew into town for 36 hours of top notch baseball (with the notable exception of Dotel's pitching performance) fine cuisine, excessive libations, and one extensive research study. Enron Field is quite a spectacle, and my one piece of advice to those of you who were unable to view it firsthand is simple: If you are not fond of moonwalking, don't ever draft an Astro pitcher. Balls were flying out of "Coors light" faster than twenty dollar bills out of an idiot's wallet at a strip club. The stadium itself is magnificent with the roof open, and ranks slightly above adequate with the lid shut. We happened to see both. My only distaste for the stadium stems solely from the memories of watching Ray Durham deposit Octavio's initial offering (that's right, the first pitch of the freaking game!) about 600 feet away, making a genius out of **Baby Trumpetfish**, who sagely predicted the shot.

After arriving right on time in Houston (thank goodness, I was starting to fret that we might be late), we loaded immediately into the brand spanking new bitch wagon called "the Montana" and headed straight for downtown. Chauffeur Tony guided us effortlessly through this concrete jungle called Houston, past the Hub Cap Emporium, Chico's Fish Taco stand, the XXX Caba-

ret, the Church of Christ, the Chamber of Commerce, and Whataburger, which all happen to be located within 15 feet of each other. I am quite confident that “Pretty” is not an adjective that has ever been used to describe this metropolis deep in the heart of Texas.

We arrived at our hotel in rapid fashion, unpacked at warp speed, and prepared to head to the ballpark, eagerly anticipating the taste of our first cold one. The hotel itself was top notch, fitting accommodations for this group of elitists, and came at a bargain basement price, especially for the one league member who opted to sleep on the floor. (This league member shall remain unnamed, but is allegedly the same individual who has been seen with his backpack at the Valentino’s buffet). What a deal. Luxury accommodations at discount pricing, right in the heart of downtown Houston. Kudos to the savvy league members who orchestrated this trip.

After our man Reggie fixed us up with a cab, we arrived at the ballpark around 10:15, a full two hours prior to game time. What is one to do for two hours, you ask? Well, Margaritas in the right field bar taste mighty good at that hour of the morning, so we went ahead and imbibed. To pass the time until the first pitch, we watched the Sox take batting practice, while simultaneously engaging in the lengthy time killing game of naming “famous Magglio’s” of the world. As **Tony** reminded us several times that morning while hoisting a cocktail to his lips, “**This is Livin!**”

Next, we became part of baseball history. No, it wasn’t an unassisted triple play this time or someone’s 2000th hit. Not even close. We’ll be telling *our* grandchildren that we were there for the first “building clearing” fire alarm in Enron Field history, and at the same game, the first ball hit off a ceiling girder into fair territory. Life doesn’t get much better than that.

Saturday night was surprisingly low key. After a light meal at Pappasita’s, certain league members opted to retire early, while those who remained up quietly toasted our good fortune over a bottle of champagne and a few cocktails.

Sunday began with the traditional HSL brunch, consisting of miniature portions of eggs, sausage, bacon, flapjacks (not skipjacks), hash browns, toast, grits, donuts, coffee, juice, and water. Then it was off to the stadium once again, for brats, beer, goobers, chili cheese

dogs, super ropes, and snow cones. Did I mention that I’ve been losing weight?

After Sunday’s slugfest was complete, we headed back to the hotel for a brief respite before our departure to the airport. As we killed time in the lobby of the Hyatt, each of the trip attendees suddenly became violently ill. No, it wasn’t the remnants of a hangover or even the acid reflux from dinner at Pappasita’s. We were all watching Sports Center highlights, wondering how the show somehow had become “**Possum’s Power Parade**”. Clip after clip showed “Me e-mail a Plenty’s” squad banging out production like the Malaysians on the t-shirt line at Art FX. Todd Helton is on a pace to hit .850 with 96 dingers; Edgar Martinez, at age 62, is threatening to displace Hack Wilson from his single season RBI perch, and Jeff Kent continues to wield a torrid bat. It’s all rather nauseating. Thank goodness for point caps. (Wait a minute, what am I extolling the virtues of point caps for? Those same limits that cost B.T. the championship last year are going to start kicking my ass in about two weeks. Points caps are ridiculous!)

All told, it was a wonderful trip, save for the extremely sensitive security incident involving **Skippy** at Houston Intercontinental on the way home. It seems the self satisfied one tried to smuggle a set of num-chucks on to the plane, only to be apprehended by the quick thinking, eagle eyed security officer in attendance at her booth. This fine young lady, who was only doing her job trying to protect the rest of us fare paying, law abiding passengers from the forces of evil, was forced into a heated confrontation with our league Ninja. The conversation escalated through four levels of the airport security command chain, until the assistant to the assistant manager had to step in and propose a resolution of compromise for handling the weapons. At long last, it seems the souveinir bats have made their way into the hands of Will and Joe.

Special recognition for the trip must go to **Rube**, who is either totally ignorant of all marriage preservation strategies or else has one gargantuan set of cajones. The shifty Iowegan attended the weekend function after coming off a 10 day drunk in Canada and a weekend at Bernie’s prior to that. Talk about paddling your own canoe; this dude’s got his on auto pilot.

Other random comments regarding the trip and the fate of your teams:

Shamu. Congratulations, my friend. With one third of the baseball season behind us, you are on a pace to finish 3270 points out of first place. Never before has a team achieved so little so fast. Short of you picking up a couple sluggers like Barry Bonds and Matt Williams, you are destined for the HSL futility record book. (Kevin Brown, Kevin Brown, Kevin Brown)

Stretch McBlunder. For those of you who hadn't heard, Stretch has decided to undertake a career change. He will be relocating to Houston to complete a recently begun research project and to handle tax law interpretation for those individuals who earn less than \$600 per year (per day?) This move was born out of necessity after the elongated one was unable to devise an alternate strategy on behalf of his client in the landmark case "Stretch v. The Chicken". It seems Stretch's client had fabricated the truth somewhat, and had taken more than a few liberties with his interpretation of the facts, and at long last, after eighteen months, was exposed by the Famous Chicken and his counsel. These actions resulted in the summary dismissal of all actions against the Chicken, leaving Stretch to ponder how in the world he is going to make his next mortgage payment without the big payout which he was so confident would be his at the end of the trial. Only took a year and a half to figure out his client was lying his ass off and looking to make a quick buck. Hence, the relocation.

Give Stretch credit, though. His streak of participation on HSL outings remains intact. How many of us can say that!

Underbelly Nice work on the recent edition of The Bellyflop, and thanks for the kiss of death. Since you predicted the Skipjacks to retain the trophy this year, my staff has put together a string of minus 15's and Robb Nen continues to torch save opportunities.

I personally think the Chiefs are going to win it. This group of nobodies has been rejuvenated by their slimy manager, and when the point caps begin to take their toll, the Native Americans will be there to scoop up the crown.

Sorry for leaving the rest of you out, but your teams all suck and I'm getting tired of writing this thing. **Big Guy**, you can probably pick Lima back up off the free agent list in a couple of weeks. In the immortal words of Maggie from Caddyshack, "Tanks for nothin".

Until next year's trip or until someone really pisses me off, The Jiggernaut signs off.

Itchie