



FROM THE BULLPEN

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HOUSTON, REVISITED

Great trip to Houston, men. Thanks for last week's pithy and on-the-mark recap, Snitchie. But allow me a few additional comments:

✧ While Itchie's oft-muttered credo was *There's nothin' I don't know*, more accurately, it's *There's nothin' Itchie doesn't think he knows*.

✧ If you, Itchie, don't have permanent hiccups from sucking down 37 margaritas, I'll be surprised. You make Foster Brooks look like a teetotaler. Get some help.

✧ The Trip was a first for me in at least one respect. I've never seen a person (Shamu*) slurp down someone else's barbecue sauce-soaked bun, *sans* meat, before. If Itchie's credo is *There's nothin' I don't know*, then Shamu's* has got to be *There's nothin' I won't eat*.

✧ I'll never again try smuggling weapons (miniature souvenir baseball bats) on a plane. Help me with that one, please.

✧ I should have pulled the trigger on Glavine-for-Delgado. His very next outing, Glavine gives up 6 earned runs in six innings, with 9 hits and 6 walks. Delgado goes 1-for-2 against Glavine, and earns three of those walks. Darn it.

✧ Our fearless leader, Tony, is a damn walking frat party. Let down your hair and have a little fun, Tone! But seriously, everybody should have a little more Tony in them. And come to think of it, Tony might be better off if he had a little bit less Tony in him.

HSL TRIP SUMMARY

Since we spent a lot of time on the Trip musing about prior Trips and the various happenings thereon, I thought it would be well to update our list of trips, and

I enclose same herewith. A few comments are in order:

♦ The years and memories add up, don't they? Can you believe we've been doing this for 16 years, have visited 17 cities, have seen 19 ballparks, attended 41 games, and seen 25-different teams? Holy Toledo. Life is good.

♦ The only teams we haven't seen play, by my calculations, are the Pirates, Mets, Marlins, Diamondbacks and Devil Rays, expansion clubs all save the Pirates.

♦ I believe that the only cities left unvisited and un-pillaged by the HSL are: Seattle¹, Montreal¹, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Miami¹, Tampa Bay, Phoenix¹, and San Francisco/Oakland.

♦ The ballparks remaining on our list for official HSL trips are: Shea Stadium (oh, boy); Three Rivers Stadium (ditto); Exposition Stadium (you wouldn't want to miss this beauty); Veterans Stadium in Philly; the Tropicana Dome in Tampa/St. Pete; Joe Robby in Miami; the Ballpark at Arlington; Bank One Ballpark in Phoenix; brand-spanking new Comerica Park in Detroit; and Pac Bell in San Francisco; the place in Oakland where they play baseball (do they still call it Oakland-Alameda County Stadium?); and Safeco Field in Seattle. Oh, and the Baggy Dome in Minneapolis. And Cinergy Field in Cincinnati. I say let's target the brand new jewels for the next few years (San Francisco, Milwaukee, Detroit, the new ones to be built in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati), and catch the rest of the older, less-distinguished stadiums later. Maybe we'll get lucky and they'll put up retro ballparks in Minneapolis, Montreal and Philadelphia. Blongo, you'll have to get up to Three Rivers on your own before they tear it down.

MEMORIES, AH, THE MEMORIES

¹ Unless we count "unofficial" league junkets such as Shamu*, Big Guy and my Opening Day 2000 trip to Seattle; the trip with B.T., U-belly and myself to Montreal and Cooperstown in 1992; our spring training trip to Miami circa 1988 (Shamu*, Sandjigger, U-belly, Skipper), and our multiple trips to the Phoenix area for grapefruit league games.

As mentioned above, as old farts like to do, we spent a fair amount of time on this year's Trip reminiscing about memories from Trips past. A few of the highlights that were mentioned:

✓ Breakfast at Lenny's in Cleveland after getting all tanked-up at the Flats the night before.

✓ B.T.'s bypassing of the interstate system between Buffalo, New York, and Cleveland, to the abject horror of McBlunder and the delight of all others.

✓ McBlunder's willingness to jump fifty feet into the river in Milwaukee on a \$100 dare.

✓ The seat-cushion incident in Milwaukee.

✓ "Cones" Night in Milwaukee.

✓ Itchie's dusting in Cleveland.

✓ Tony trying to will himself back to sobriety 75 beers into his 100-beer weekend in Denver, and his utter lack of movement and/or recognition as Vinny Castilla whistled a 420-foot scud missile mere inches over his grape.

✓ Blongo's negotiating tactics with the Huggy-Bear look-alike in Chicago. (Let's see, he's got our tickets in one hand, our money in the other hand, and he's standing across a very busy street from us in a throng of people. What's wrong with this picture?)

✓ Seeing John Valentin's unassisted triple play in Boston (and the poignancy of the moment when we recognized it two days later).

✓ Hearing the Irish tenor (Tip O'Neill's twin brother) sing *Danny Boy* in downtown Baws-ton.

✓ The seven shades of green that Mouse turned as he worked on his enchilada platter in San Clemente.

✓ Our minor van accident (wedging it into the low-clearance garage) at the Tricky Dick Hotel in San Clemente.

✓ And many others. But perhaps the most frequently-mentioned highlight of any Trip—and this just goes to show how male (love that construction humor) and demented that we all are—was Tricko's² head-over-heels, teeth-shattering, street-reverberating, near-fatal, full-extension Face Flop on our '93 California Dreaming swing. Ouch. Double ouch. Curby's fall

² Then known as Magpie, soon to be known as Curby.

made David Palmer's little mishap at third base look like a feather wafting to the ground. The poor slob hit so hard, his grandchildren's grandchildren may need dental work. Tricko had to have lost a good ten years off of his life expectancy from that fall. In fact, the only way that Tricko could ever top that trip-and-fall would be if we visited Phoenix for a Diamondbacks game and then took a side junket up to the Grand Canyon.

Now, *that* was funny. And part of HSL lore.

Ah, the memories. Where to next year, fellas?

ALL-TIMERS

I have been remiss in not pointing out that this year's inflated offensive numbers have yielded a new entry into the HSL All-Time Weekly Points-Scored List. With Mouse's 517-point Week 4, we now have all 500+ point totals for the top ten, and the Redbirds' 497-point week ending August 13, 1995, drops off the list. Here is the new All-Time Top Ten:

TOP TEN HSL WEEKS

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>Week Ending</u>
1.	551	Blues	05/31/98
2.	537	Blues	08/16/98
3.	527	Senators	08/24/97
4.	526	Reds	07/03/94
5.	520	Reds	06/30/96
6.	517	Bombers	04/30/00
7.	505	Redbirds	07/26/98
8.	504	Reds	07/25/99
(T)	504	Skipjacks	07/25/99
10.	503	Reds	07/04/99

Despite yeoman efforts by the Cubs*, there are no new entrants on our Bottom Ten list, which reads as follows:

BOTTOM 10

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>Week Ending</u>
1.	131	Pirates	05/04/97
2.	136	Tigers	05/22/94
3.	138	Senators	05/01/94
4.	145	Blues	05/16/99
5.	149	Tribe	09/26/93
6.	153	Pirates	10/03/93
7.	159	Cubs*	09/26/93
8.	162	Blues	09/12/93
(T)	162	Skipjacks	04/13/97
10.	164	Pirates	06/04/94
(T)	164	Pirates	06/22/97
(T)	164	Tribe	08/01/99

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 10

	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
1.	Skipjacks	3988

	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
2.	Wahoos	3928
3.	Chiefs	3862
4.	Reds	3586
5.	Bombers	3486
6.	Blues	3391
7.	Tigers	3305
8.	Senators	3062
9.	Pirates	3038
10.	Tribe	3024
11.	Redbirds	3013
12.	Cubs*	2941

WEEK 10 POINT TOTALS

	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Pt.Total</u>
1.	Cubs*	392
(T)	Skipjacks	392
3.	Chiefs	378
4.	Reds	357
5.	Bombers	328
6.	Tribe	320
7.	Blues	316
8.	Wahoos	289
9.	Tigers	238
10.	Pirates	235
11.	Redbirds	233
12.	Senators	219

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 9

	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
1.	Wahoos	3639
2.	Skipjacks	3596
3.	Chiefs	3485
4.	Reds	3229
5.	Bombers	3158
6.	Blues	3075
7.	Tigers	3067
8.	Senators	2843
9.	Pirates	2804
10.	Redbirds	2780
11.	Tribe	2704
12.	Cubs*	2549

WEEK 9 POINT TOTALS

	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Pt.Total</u>
1.	Wahoos	492
2.	Chiefs	438
3.	Cubs*	412
4.	Reds	352
5.	Tigers	336
6.	Skipjacks	334
7.	Bombers	328
8.	Pirates	320
9.	Blues	318
10.	Senators	267
(T)	Tribe	267

BALLS AND STRIKES

♦ Why, oh why, oh why, oh why, oh why, oh why didn't I pull the trigger on the Glavine-for-Carlos Delgado trade proposal from Hayden on The Trip? Jim Ed was begging me to do the deal, and I just couldn't give up pitching for hitting. So what happens next? Glavine continues his slide toward the garbage heap while Delgado was the hottest player in the majors during Week 10, batting .500 for the week and knocking out four home runs. Glavine contributed to the cause, walking Delgado three times and giving up one hit to him in his pathetic outing against the Blue Jays just two days after I nixed the offer.

Update City: This just in, fellas. A blockbuster deal between the hitting-starved Senators and the hitting-bloated Wahoos, in the form of Tom Glavine for Bernie Williams and Troy Glaus. In other words, Glavine is about to go on a tear unrivaled since Orel Hershiser's 1988 rampage, while Bernie and Troy are about to see their careers threatened by prolonged droughts while on the Senators' roster. Call me an optimist.

♦ I've probably said this before, but I'm not sure there's ever been a Shell Game like the one going on in the Senators' camp right now. For example: I pick up a hot Jeff D'Amico in the free agent draft, and then watch him get drubbed in his one outing as a Senators starter before going on the DL. Jason Schmidt comes off the DL and has a nice outing his first time back while in my minors, followed by two bruising as a Senators starter, followed by a return to the DL. J.D. Drew—the unofficial captain of the "Let's Drive Skipper Mad" movement—blasted two home runs while on my bench, followed by back-to-back 4000s after his promotion. Cristian Guzman has three or four good nights in a row in my minor leagues, followed by three or four hitless nights while in the starting lineup, with a couple of errors sprinkled in. David Segui takes the night off as the Rangers score eleven runs. Fletcher the Catcher refuses to start in more than three games a week while a Senators starter. And so on, and so on, *ad nauseum*. Now that Brad Ausmus is my starting backstop, look for his candle of hope to be summarily snuffed out.

♦ When it's not your year, it's just not your year, is it? After whining and bitching about Trevor Hoffman never getting any save opportunities, he gets and blows two of them in the span of about ten days, probably about the same number of blown saves he has had in the past half-decade.

♦ Last night, I watched painfully as Mike Remlinger was given a chance to close out the Pirates if he could only hold the 6-3 lead that was handed to him. The first batter, Kevin Young, slaps a single to start the rally. Remlinger walks the next hitter. Nice. A ground ball to Chipper makes it one out,

runners on first and third. The next batter is Bruce Aven, whoever he is, a stocky, slow-looking guy. He hits a ground ball which Skip Caray announces to be a tailor-made double-play ball, which Quilvio fields cleanly, tosses to second for the turn, but somehow Aven legs it out and beats the throw, allowing a run to score and the inning to continue. On the replay, I couldn't believe my eyes. Deion Sanders couldn't have beat this one out to avoid the double play, but somehow Aven does, beating it down to first base as if being chased by a pack of wild dogs. So, of course, instead of Remlinger getting out of the inning relatively unscathed and chalking up a save, the inning continues. Next up is the light-hitting journeyman Mike Benjamin, who has one home run to his name this year and the goofiest looking pair of sideburns you've ever seen. Naturally, Benjamin smokes a line drive into right field, missing a home run by about a foot, and putting runners on second and third. Next up is Warren Morris, a lefty who has almost no shot at getting a hit off Remlinger. First pitch is a beautiful curve ball which hits the outside corner and is absolutely unreachable by Morris. Next pitch is a fabulous change-up which nearly screws Morris into the ground. 0-and-2, pitcher's count. So of course Remlinger then hangs Uncle Charlie up high and Morris goes the other way with it, blasting it into left field for a bases-clearing hit, tying the game and blowing Remlinger's save. Not that I give a damn about this league, anyway.

◆ But enough about me. Let's spread the pain around a bit, shall we? SloPay has to be happy about dumping off Kevin Young, who has since turned it up a notch to prove him wrong, cranking out six RBIs in one game against the Braves, followed by three RBIs the next night. The race to the garbage heap is on.

◆ And what about poor Hayden and his Deadbirds? Even with the blast-furnace hot Carlos Delgado on his team, the Boids iz hoiting, with just about every other hitter cold as ice, and with a starting pitching staff that is backpedaling faster than Itchie trying to explain a bad night at the boats to his spouse. Kevin Millwood lasted just a third of an inning the other night, and Andy Ashby continues to flounder as a Phillie. This poor team could definitely supplant the Cubs* in the league bowels, unless the flagging Senators get there first.

◆ As bad as Hayden's staff is, I still think that the Tribe moundsmen have a shot at scoring the fewest pitching points of all time in the HSL during the Bill James era. But I could be wrong. Maybe Stan Spencer and Joe Nathan are the second and third coming of Walter Johnson, and will carry this staff from ignominy to glory. And maybe Shamu* will order something light off the menu instead of going through the all-you-can-eat buffet at Valentino's this weekend.

◆ Speaking of Shamu*, two things: One, his Cubs* are quietly making their move, scoring a third-best total of 412 points during Week 9, and a league-best total of 392 points during Week 10. They're still in last, but now have the Pirates, Redbirds, Tribe and Senators in their sights. Unless Itchie is able to crowbar Kevin Brown away from him, Shamu's* club is actually going to finish the 2000 season in some position other than last. Item two: When you get a chance, have Big Guy relate the Pumpkin Pie Chronicles to you, a recently-learned story from Shamu's* yoot that says a lot about our carrot-topped amigo.

So long. Because I'm getting ready to start a rather lengthy trial, it may be a few weeks before the next issue of *FTB*, unless the Senators go on a tear, of course.

Skipper