



FROM THE BULLPEN

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Eastern Nebraska Division

2000 Season Edition No. 13

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FIRST HALF REPORT

Wahoos Rule;
Chiefs Goin' to School;
Reds in Third;
Jax Get the Bird;
Blues No. 5;
Bombers Still Alive (Barely);
Tigers in 7th Place;
Crimson Chirpers in Skipper's Face;
Senatros Just Can't Get a Break;
Cubs* Doin' Shake 'N Bake;
Pirates Still Spending Bucks;
Tribe Really Really Sucks

Brethren:

Welcome, boys and girls, to the second half of the season. For many of us, we'd just as soon forget the entire first half and pretend like the second half is a whole new ballgame, and that each of us has a chance to compete anew. But we know better, don't we.

The amazing Wa-Wa-Wa-Wahoos—they of the recent name change and organizational attitude adjustment—are running away with this thing on a real-time basis, if not in the hearts and minds of the projected points gurus down there at Bill James. Here are the standings through the end of fourteen weeks, through July 9, 2000:

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 14

	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
1.	Wahoos	5550
2.	Chiefs	5259
3.	Reds	5166
4.	Skipjacks	5156
5.	Blues	4808
6.	Bombers	4756
7.	Tigers	4731
8.	Redbirds	4668
9.	Senatros	4434
10.	Cubs*	4359
11.	Pirates	4266
12.	Tribe	4182

The league MVP at the half-way mark is A-Rod, with 553 points, not quite double the point production of the Senators top point-getter. The top pitcher for the year is Randy Johnson, who has accumulated a whopping total of 481 points in carrying the Chiefs to their current 2nd-place position.

AROUND THE HORN

Since it's been a while since the last issue of *From the Bullpen*, let's take a trot around the horn to see what's going on in the old neighborhood, shall we?

Wahoos: Un-freaking-believable. Uncanny. Unreal. And most of all, unfair, at least to the rest of us, that is. Possum selected what looked to be like yet another typical mediocre Red Sox team, heavy on hitting, devoid of pitching, and unlikely to compete for a money spot. But then Possum astonishes all of us by slapping the "Wahoos" moniker on this band of idiots, and *voila*—I like to use that word every two or three years or so—they are suddenly the second coming of the '98 Blues, the team by which all HSL champions must be measured.¹

I'm utterly nauseated by the rampant overachievement by just about each and every member of the Wahoos squad. The stars are all truly aligned this year. Don't believe me? Take a look at each of these Wahoovian players and a comparison of this year's batting averages with their career batting averages:

	<u>Wahoovian</u>	<u>Career Avg.</u>	<u>2000 Avg.</u> ²
	Piazza	.328	.345
	Helton	.315	.381
	Edgar Martinez	.320	.354
	Jeff Kent	.276	.338
	Nevin	.243	.283
	Aurilia	.270	.280

¹ Don't know why I'm kissing McBlunder's rear.

² Through games of Monday, July 24.

<u>Wahoovian</u>	<u>Career Avg.</u>	<u>2000 Avg.²</u>
Sheffield	.290	.336
Carlos Lee	.293	.294
Edmonds	.290	.328
Hammonds	.268	.355

In addition to each of these ten Wahoo regulars having better batting averages this year than their career averages (and all by a wide margin, save Aurilia and Lee), most all of these guys are on pace to post career marks in runs, hits, home runs and RBIs. Frinstance, Piazza is on pace for 46 home runs and 134 RBIs, both career bests by a wide margin. Helton is on pace to score 152 runs. Last year he scored 114. E-Mart is on pace for 154 RBIs, 41 more than his career best. Jeff Kent is on target to hit 40 home runs, 9 more than his career best. Edmonds is on pace to hit 46 home runs, 13 more than his career high. Hammonds has already exceeded his previous RBI season total of 55 with his 73 RBIs through Monday. And so on, and so on, and so on.

And while Possum drafted what appeared to be a pathetic pitching staff, in addition to staff ace Glavine, Possum has five other pitchers averaging more than 10 points a game with Dempster, Anderson, Benes, Schilling and Moehler. The guy is going to be tough to beat. Looks like it is indeed the year of the Wa-Wa-Wahoos.

Chiefs: Although the Chiefs finished the first half of the season in 2nd place, they have their work cut out for them to maintain this position during the second half of the season. With Quilvio out for the year, Lieberthal on the DL, and Carl "The Truth Is I Never Headbutted Him" Everett about to ride pine for ten days, the Chiefs will be challenged to stay up with the field during the next couple of weeks. With the Big Unit taking a beating at the hands of the Cardinals the other day, there also appear to be a few chinks in the Chiefs' pitching armor, as well. Scary to think that B.T. will be relying upon the likes of Jeff D'Amico (former Senator) and Hideo Nomo (former Senator) to shoulder the load, and that the backstop duties will be handled by Brad Ausmus (former Senator). If B.T. does win this thing, it's clear he owes it all to me for cutting these guys loose and making them available.

Reds: I'm not quite sure how this team has eked its way into 3rd place. Even with the likes of Eric Karros, Ron Belliard, Miguel Tejada, Adam Eaton, and Gil Meche in starting roles, this team keeps plugging away and climbing its way up the ladder. Maybe Tricko can shake the monkey off his back and get back into the

glory years of the Reds franchise with a money finish in 2000.

Skipjacks: Hide the razor blades and steak knives, and lock up the booze and sleeping pills. With Pudge lost for the season with the broken thumb, this already swooning team is destined for a painful second half. Unless the wily Itchie can pull a rabbit out of the hat and reinvent this team, their future is in the past. This has got to be the only team in the league with two pitchers on the roster with negative points (Erickson -8, Lima -24), more than half-way into the season. Welcome to the Lower Division, Johnny.

Blues: No way can this smelly team keep it up for an Upper Division finish. With Bobby Estalella, Todd Zeile, Jose Valentin, Marvin Benard, Rich Garces and Mike Morgan all on the active roster, this tells you all you need to know about the Blues: Thin and weak. Kept afloat all year by overachieving performances from Giambi, Luis Castillo, Andruw Jones, and Vladdy, I look for this team to revert to form and drop like Magpie's sagging pecs during the second half of the campaign.

Bombers: With Shannon Stewart, Benny Agbayani, Gerald Williams and Jeromy Burnitz in Mouse's starting outfield, you have to wonder how this team can possibly be in 6th place.³ With McGwire nursing a bad knee, with Vinny having a most forgettable year, and with Cone on his last legs, the Bombers have had to rely upon starting pitchers like James Baldwin, Terry Mulholland, John Burkett and Kent Hill. That, my friends, is enough to make anyone's blood run cold. If you can pilot this leaky tiki to anything other than an eleventh-place finish, Brother Mouse, our hats will be off to you.

Tigers: I've been looking *up* at this crappy team all year, and I'm sick of it. Every time this lousy team starts playing down to its potential and putting itself within striking distance by the Senators, Eric Milton spins a gem or Paul O'Neill has a 6 RBI night and the Tigers squib their way out of my sights. This team can't possibly finish ahead of the Senators this season, can it?

Redbirds: Pee-yoo. There's not one thing to like about this mud-fence ugly team, yet somehow they manage to find themselves ahead of the Senators. And according to Hayden, there's absolutely no chance that the Senators will be able to catch and overtake the 'Boids. Well, we'll have to see about that, Birdman.

Okay, so they've got Carlos Delgado, who is one heckuva hitter. And they've got Jason Kendall, who's not bad if you have to have a catcher on your team. But who else on

³ Through the All-Star break, now an ancient memory for Mouse.

this team would you really want to have on your squad? Brad Fullmer? No. Edgar Renteria? Definitely not. Kenny Lofton? A whining has-been. Sidney Ponson? Only if you own the Tribe. John Garland? Only if you like negative numbers.

No matter how you slice this loaf, it comes up warm spam. A team befitting an obnoxious Iowagean. Read my lips, Hayden: Lower Division Finish.

Senators: Don't get me started. No matter which red-hot catcher I swap for on Sunday night, he turns out dung by Monday night on the Senators roster. No matter how long I wait for Chris Singleton to heat up for a replay of last year, he continues to suck. No matter when I put in a newly-acquired pitcher, he's going to take a pounding his first time in the Senators' starting lineup. That's the kind of year that 2000 has turned out to be, and there's not one darned thing that I can do about it. I'm working the waiver wire like a damned fool just to keep the Senators out of last place. Fortunately, with the Tribe in the league, it's not really all that difficult. But next year, it's going to be difficult. Right, Bob?

Cubs*: Is this team going to keep moving up the totem pole, or have they maxed out for the year in 10th place? The latter, I pray.

With a fully healthy squad, it looks like the Cubs* have a chance to make a little bit of noise in the Lower Division, although an Upper Division finish seems out of the question. Just what I need: One more guy drafting ahead of me next year. Go down, Kevin Brown. Oops. Did I say that out loud?

Pirates: This team's woes are well-documented. Every time SloPay pulls the exit lever on one of his players for nonperformance, said player goes on a tear. Kevin Young (6 RBIs), Brian Daubach (same), and Russ Branyan come to mind. Patience, Denny, patience. You've been tutoring at the feet of the imperious Geppetto for far too long.

With free agent additions Fred McGriff, Ron Coomer, and Lance Berkman, SloPay has done a nice job of filling out his everyday lineup. Although the Pirates have virtually no shot at finishing higher than 11th, it looks like finishing ahead of the fumbling, bumbling Tribe should be as easy as taking candy from a really dumb baby.

Tribe: And then there's the Tribe. A single managerial move by the imbecilic Tribe manager is a microcosm of this sorry franchise's entire season. On June 25, without any conceivable basis whatsoever, U-Bob demoted Jeff Cirillo and promoted Pat Burrell. Just one week earlier, Cirillo had a five-hit night at the tail end of a torrid hitting streak in which he had hits in 21 out of 22 games. Then, after going hitless in four of the next six games, U-Belly pulled the plug on him.

What happened next is historic. On June 26th, Cirillo's line score was 4-3-3-3, with a double and a base on balls. On the 27th, Cirillo went 1-1 with an RBI and two walks. And then on the 28th, the coup de gras: Cirillo's line that night was 5-5-4-6, with three home runs *in the minors*. Still, Cirillo hadn't quite redeemed himself in the eyes of U-Bob, and on the 29th he went 5-1-3-3, with a double.

During those four historic nights on the Tribe bench, Cirillo scored a whopping total of 89.5 points for the Tribe farm team. Or about the distance between the Tribe (at that time) and the 11th place Pirates.

From this point forward, the "Cirillo incident" shall be the bonehead managerial blunder by which all future HSL gaffes must be measured. Deserving of a basement finish for the Tribe.

TOP PLAYERS AT THE BREAK⁴

	<u>Hitters</u>	
1.	A-Rod	522
2.	Kent	504
3.	I-Rod	477
(T)	Delgado	477
5.	Helton	457
6.	Erstad	450
7.	Vidro	435
8.	Thomas	428
9.	E-Mart	428
10.	Vladdy	416
(T)	Giambi	416
12.	Edmonds	413
13.	Piazza	404
(T)	Sheffield	404
15.	Williams	402

Note that the Wahoos have the Nos. 2, 5, 9, 12, 13 and 13th (tied) ranked hitters on his squad. Uncanny.

⁴ Excluding Bonus Points.

Pitchers

1.	RJ	481
2.	Pedro	362
3.	Brown	338
4.	Wells	308
5.	Maddux	297
6.	Leiter	285
7.	Leiber	281
8.	Graves	268
9.	Benson	266
10.	Glavine	259

SAME TIME, LAST YEAR

Through fourteen weeks last year, the Chiefs were leading the way with 5152 points, while the Cubs* were a close second with 5139 points, and the Jax third with 5071. The top hitter for the season through the break was Bagwell with 524 points. The top pitcher through that point in the season was Pedro, with 487 points. Makes you appreciate the kind of years A-Rod and RJ are having.

FOUL TIPS

♦ I absolutely agonized about whether to promote Paul Byrd into my starting rotation about a week and a half ago. He was just coming off a couple of decent outings, and looked like he was about to turn his season around. I figured if I didn't promote him, he would twirl a shutout or at least a complete game gem that would cost me 25 or 30 points. So I spent probably 45 minutes at the computer looking at his stats from this year, last year, and every year, seeing how he pitched at home, on the road, at night, during the day, on grass, on turf, and most of all, against the Pirates and against the Cubs, the two teams that he would next be facing if promoted. Turns out, the Byrd-Man has a very good track record against both of those teams, and so I figured that it would be managerial negligence if I *didn't* promote him. So I promote the guy, demoting one of my fairly hot hitters, and then held my breath for the next fifteen hours. You can guess the rest of the story. Bye-bye Byrdie gets his beak smashed in by the Pirates the next afternoon, lasting only four innings or so and giving up a nestful of runs. This, of course, didn't spell the end of my woes with Byrd. Before his next scheduled starting outing, the Phillies' skipper saw fit to put Byrd in for some long relief against the Cubs, and then cut the phone wire to the bullpen and let him twist until he had given up six runs in the span of an inning and a third. I couldn't even stand to count up the negative points that Byrdie trotted me backwards. And worst of all, horror of horrors, he's throw-

ing again tomorrow before I can demote him per the ten-day rule. Guaranteed not to be pretty.

♦ It's been so long since the last *Bullpen*, I don't think that anyone's ever pointed out that the balding credit card salesman had a bit of a managerial miscue himself in recent times, demoting the hot-and-cold Mike Lansing on the eve of his cycle performance. Big deal. What's 50 or 60 points when you're in the heat of the pennant race, eh, Itchie?

♦ How about the Diamondbacks trading for Curt Schilling? Great move. Great 1-2 punch. But, I read one media genius' comment that this was the best 1-2 punch in baseball since Koufax and Drysdale. Okay, fair enough. But then this over-excited media hack went on to enthusiastically offer that "I'll take *these* two," meaning RJ and Schilling over Koufax and Drysdale. Sure, pal. You know your baseball history, don't you. And no, it wasn't Woody Paige, although it certainly sounds like something Woody would say.

♦ I keep meaning to bring up the subject of next year's Trip. Anybody have any thoughts on where to go to try to top Houston? I know that Big Guy and Stretch are both heading to Detroit later this summer for a glimpse at Comerica Park, and certainly we will need to have their reports on this park in deciding next year's Trip. McBlunder has also suggested that Milwaukee might be a good choice for next year, in light of the opening of the new stadium, and the recent rekindling of the good memories from our last trip to Cheeseheadland. And let's not forget about the new ballpark in San Francisco, either. Some tough choices to make. Hey, who's in charge next year?

CLOSING

Sorry for the long delay between *Bullpens*. Between a recent jury trial, my trip to Colorado, and my team's miserable performance this summer, I have allowed my priorities to get a little bit out of whack. I'll do better. As a parting shot for the week, I will leave you with the standings through Week 16, and point out that the Senators led all teams during Week 16 of the season, and slipped past the flagging Bombers and back into 8th place.

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 16

	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
1.	Wahoos	6294
2.	Reds	5890
3.	Chiefs	5828
4.	Skipjacks	5820
5.	Blues	5458
6.	Redbirds	5348

	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
7.	Tigers	5292
8.	Senators	5192
9.	Bombers	5177
10.	Cubs*	5001
11.	Pirates	4876
12.	Tribe	4761

See you next week.

Skipper