



# FROM THE BULLPEN

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## WAHOOS COASTING TOWARD TITLE, POSSUM READY TO LIGHT VICTORY STOGIE

With less than two weeks to go in the season, Possum's **Wahoos** look to have the 2000 HSL title all but sewn up. With a commanding 337-point lead over the **Reds**, and a projected-point margin victory of 292 points, it would take a cataclysmic slump by the Wahoos in the waning moments of the season for the title to end up elsewhere. It looks more and more like Possum will be anointed with his first HSL crown since 1986, during the tainted dead-ball era.

Here are the standings through 24 weeks:

### STANDINGS THRU WEEK 24

	<u>Team</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
1.	Wahoos	8816
2.	Reds	8479
3.	Skipjacks	8448
4.	Redbirds	8321
5.	Blues	8319
6.	Chiefs	8276
7.	Senators	8148
8.	Tigers	7881
9.	Bombers	7819
10.	Cubs*	7396
11.	Tribe	7218
12.	Pirates	7196

A-Rod of the **Tigers** continues to lead the individual hitters with 829 points, and Pedro Martinez of the **Skipjacks** leads all pitchers with 742.5 points.

Here are the point totals for Week 24:

### POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 24

	<u>Team</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
1.	Chiefs	409
2.	Blues	433
3.	Senators	428

	<u>Team</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
4.	Redbirds	414
5.	Reds	405
6.	Tigers	399
7.	Skipjacks	361
8.	Cubs*	338
9.	Tribe	332
10.	Bombers	330
11.	Pirates	310
12.	Wahoos	241

## BALLS AND STRIKES

• A hearty hi-ho to U-Bob for finally piloting his **Tribe** out of the cellar, for the first time in a long time. With the momentum that the Tribe has achieved, and their sizeable projected-points lead over the **Pirates**, it looks like another cellar finish for Slo-Brain.

• How do those raggedy-ass **Redbirds** continue to chalk up 400+ point weeks? Like U-Bob, I just don't get it with this team, which has looked like a bottom-dweller since Draft Day. This exact same team, if picked next year, would probably finish at the bottom of the heap.

• Even with Possum's team running on a surface of banana peels, following up his 197-point Week 23 with a 241-point Week 24, this baby is in the bag for the **Wahoos**. Unless that vaunted pitching staff trots backwards to the tune of about 200 points (it could happen, as Possum had eight pitchers in his starting lineup when last reviewed, including the likes of David Wells, Brian Anderson, Brian Mohler, and Pedro Astacio, no strangers to negative point territory they), the Wahoos should coast comfortably to victory.

• Though Possum's position atop the standings seems assured, there is one helluva border skirmish going on between the **Reds** and the **Skipjacks**, with only 31 points separating them for 2<sup>nd</sup> place, and between the **Redbirds**, **Blues** and **Chiefs** for the 4-5-6 holes, with only 45 points separating these three teams. You've all seen the current

book about Vince Lombardi, *When Pride Mattered*. Well, it matters now.

## THE BELLYFLOP, REVISITED

Plaudits<sup>1</sup> to Underbelly on his Special Edition of *The Bellyflop* last week, which was absolutely hilarious and on the mark. Linda Koftan's reaction to U-Bob's *The Bellyflop* was "Is he *this* funny in person?" The answer, of course, is no, or U-Bob would be doing standup comedy routines on David Letterman (or at least as an opening act for Mel Tillis in Branson) instead of helping Vietnamese refugees clean ink off the Art FX printing presses and designing *I love Jose Lima* T shirts for the consuming public. But let's give credit where credit is due – on paper, the guy is funnier than an entire division of back-slapping FDR credit card hucksters and yucksters.

That said, thanks entirely to U-Bob, we now have a new official League nickname for the pesky little owner of the long-suffering **Redbirds** franchise, who shall forevermore be known as **TIREBITER**. With this definitive moniker having been bestowed upon the artist formerly known as Hayden, let's review now the entire list of Buser sobriquets:

### TOP TEN LIST OF FAVORITE BUSER NICKNAMES

10. Boxcar
9. Rube
8. Jim Ed
7. Hayden
6. Jimmie the Geek
5. Sparky
4. Shorty
3. Three Sheets
2. Rush, Jr.
1. **TIREBITER**<sup>2</sup>

Welcome to the Big Leagues, Tirebiter. And by the way, thanks for your recent contribution to the lore of

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<sup>1</sup> I was about to say *Kudos*, but that is so hackneyed an expression and so Tedspeak that I went with *plaudits*, which for you, B.T., means "congratulations," or simpler yet, "good show."

<sup>2</sup> Which shall now be Buser's official League nickname (at least for now), in recognition of U-Bob absolutely hitting the nail on the head. The short version, T.B., is a nice touch considering that Buser's lifelong idol is the Lincoln Chiefs helmsman, the beloved B.T.

the Hot Stove League, your September 12 edition of *Redbird Chirps*. Not a bad effort from an Iowagean with a sub-normal IQ on his first attempt at humorous journalism. Possum passes along his own kudos.

And now back to *The Bellyflop* for just a minute. We can probably all agree that U-Belly's "I would have a better chance of seeing" feature was the funniest thing that we have seen in print all year, although the truth can be rather painful, can't it. The image of Stretch clacking around on stage at a River Dance show is almost too painful to imagine, but the images of Possum sitting still at his desk and of Mouse in his wife beater T shirt at the Waggun Tongue lounge are nearly beyond my ken. Shamu\*, on the other hand, is another story. And who among us wouldn't pay for a weekend of Tricko as mime on an official league trip? How about in 2001, Magpie? It's a date.

### MORE BETTER CHANCES

At the risk of being accused of trying to gild the lily, there are a few more "better chance of seeing" scenarios that come to mind.

**We have a better chance of seeing a turban-topped Itchie make it through airport security without a hitch,** than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance of seeing Possum spring for nifty Wahoo wearing apparel for all league members after he wins this thing,** than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance of seeing Tirebiter legally unintoxicated on an HSL trip,** than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance of seeing McBlunder bring back a seven-figure jury verdict against the Chicken,** than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance of seeing Shamu stuffing salad fixin's from the Valentino's food buffet into his backpack,** than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance of seeing Big Guy and Slo-Pay get into a bloody switchblade fight,** than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance of seeing Tricko attending a league trip and bunking up with U-Bob,** than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance of *not* seeing Curby do a David Palmer-ish half-gainer off the street island on a league trip in front of unbelieving street people**, than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance of seeing U-Bob sporting a peroxide blonde pompadour hairpiece**, than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

**We have a better chance to see Tony turn down a cocktail and steer other league members away from gambling and the Houston ballet**, than U-Bob has of picking a competitive pitching staff.

And finally, we have a better chance of seeing the **Tribe** and **Pirates** finish 1-2 in this league, than we are to seeing Arnold Ziffle streaking across the October sky in formation with the Concorde.

But then again, if Shamu\* (1993) and McBlunder (1997) can etch their name upon the hallowed Cup, I guess just about anything can happen in this crazy world of ours.

### JOE AND DAD'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

On a strictly personal note (it's Planet Dave, right?), Joe Jackson (not the gay singer) and I had an absolutely bang-up trip to Chicago and South Bend the weekend before last, and I would be remiss if I didn't share with you a few of the highlights. Not only did we witness the Huskers' fabulous victory over the Fighting Irish in overtime, but we took in a game (Joe's first) at Wrigley Field on Friday. In addition to the pleasure of seeing Itchie's slug Tapani get knocked out of the box in the second inning and lose the **Skip-jacks** a bundle of points, we got to see the **Senators'** own Richard Hidalgo crank out three hits and knock in three runs, and as a bonus, saw Sammy Sosa hit his 47<sup>th</sup> home run to extend his major league lead in jacks.

A kid couldn't ask for much more than that, but in addition, we were treated to the sight of a straggly-haired, former rock-and-roller hopping over the brick wall next to the visitor's dugout and marching out to the pitching mound, whereupon he dropped trow and appeared to be set to moon the fans on the first-base side of Wrigley Field. As if that wouldn't be spectacle enough, this little dirtball tore off all of his clothes and shoes and then stood up and flipped the entire crowd a double bird, clad in nothing but his birthday suit, appendage at half-mast.

It seemed as if this showman did all of this in slow motion, and it took the stunned security force what seemed like minutes to get out to the mound and escort this disturbed little chap off the field by his lice-infested hair. To my amazement, when they reached the brick wall near the visitor's dugout, instead of ushering him down through a secret tunnel and out of sight, they hefted him up over the wall and into the stands and paraded him out through one of the regular exits by the box seats, not forty feet away from where Joe and I were sitting. Quite a sight for the crowd in general, and Joe Jackson in particular. Joe's startled question, "Why did he do that, Dad?" was one that I simply could not answer. Why, indeed, little buddy. An unforgettable Kodak moment.

A few of the other highlights from our trip:

- Seeing the spitting image of the former Maytag repairman (not Gordon Jump) put on a show for his friends, his floozy moll, and her comely sister, impressing all of those around him with his worldly ways.
- Joe's inability to understand a single word being uttered by some of urban Chicago's finest food vendors and service people (*They really are talking English, Joe, but with a street dialect*).
- Singing *America the Beautiful* with 80,000 other people and the famous Notre Dame marching band.
- Seeing the world's only black leprechaun delight the crowd with his monkeyshines and shenanigans.
- Witnessing the famous "touchdown Jesus" mural just outside the stadium.
- Trying to explain to Joe why former Husker kicker Dean "17 Sheets to the Wind" Sukap was talking in tongues when encountered in the stadium concourse.
- Being two of about 40,000 red-clad Husker fans who absolutely took over the revered cradle of American college football.

An absolutely great trip. Thanks to Scott and Kathi for the ducats.

### LEAGUE LUNCH

For those of you who can make it, we are still planning on a league lunch on Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, to pay homage and tribute to the league winner, assuming that Possum has

the title sewn up by then. Of course, if Itchie or Tricky have anything to do with it, they will still be in the hunt and doing their best to spoil Possum's much-anticipated victory celebration.

See you then, if not before.

Skipper