



# FROM THE BULLPEN

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## WAH-WAH-WAHOOS WIN-WIN-WIN

Hearty congratulations and a subliminal KMA to Brother Possum, who defied the odds, the gods, and conventional wisdom by winning this league after drafting a most mediocre pitching staff. Hey, maybe Underbelly really is right! Perhaps the take-home point is that if you draft enough hitters having career years, there will be saps out there who will be willing to guppy up and trade competent pitching for extraordinary hitting.

Lest you question this analysis, let me remind you of the pitching staff selected by Brother O'Possum on Draft Day:

<u>Pitcher</u>	<u>Round</u>	<u>Season Point Total</u>
Shane Reynolds	3	140
Ugueth Urbina	5	82
Curt Schilling	6	367
Roberto Hernandez	11	368
Kevin Appier	10	253
Sterling Hitchcock	18	58
Omar Olivares	21	1
Jim Parque	24	261
Joe Mays	25	97
Kevin McGlinchy	26	19

1646 total points. Holy Smokes. Not just an ugly staff, but Double-Ugly, as in Uggie Urbina. Of these eleven pitchers who initially (dis)graced the Wahoos' roster, only Schilling, Appier and Benes made it through the season to end up on Possum's final pitching staff, and none of these three were in the starting lineup for the Wahoos at the end.

At the end, Possum had Tom Glavine (thanks to some naïve bonehead), David Wells (courtesy of Mouse), Brian Anderson, Mike Sirotka, Brian Mohler,

Jeff Brantley, Steve Kline and Mike Timlin carrying the colors for the Wahoos, not exactly the sort of names that you would expect to be in the starting pitching rotation for a Hot Stove League championship team. Do we chalk it up to savvy maneuvering and manipulation of league rules, point caps and other league members by a sly and cunning veteran of the Hot Stove League baseball wars? Or flat-out, blind-ass luck by a struggling and pitifully owner who had not sipped from the Victory Cup for a Baker's Dozen of years, ending more than a decade of futility? In my mind, it's a close call, but I'll let the rest of you let me know what you think.

In any event, **CONGRATS TO POSSUM** for getting it done in this glorious Millennium campaign.

## FINAL STANDINGS

I would be remiss if I did not share with you now the final league standings for the 2000 season:

<u>UPPER DIVISION</u>		
<u>Team</u>	<u>Wins</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
1. Wahoos	108	9289
2. Reds	106	9107
3. Skipjacks	105	9047
4(t) Redbirds	104	8987
4(t) Senators	104	8928 <sup>1</sup>
6. Blues	103	8865
<u>LOWER DIVISION</u>		
7. Chiefs	101	8666
8. Tigers	97	8360
9. Bombers	95	8196
10. Cubs*	94	8057
11. Tribe	92	7908
12. Pirates	90	7727

## WEEK 26 TOTALS:

<sup>1</sup> At the suggestion of one or more anonymous league members, it was decided to list the final rankings in terms of team wins, in-

Not that anyone probably gives a dang, but here are the team point totals for Week 26:

### POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 26

	<u>Team</u>	<u>Total Pts.</u>
1.	Tribe	358
2.	Senators	355
3.	Cubs*	316
4.	Redbirds	315
5.	Skipjacks	310
6.	Pirates	262
7.	Tigers	257
8.	Bombers	244
9.	Blues	228
10.	Reds	205
11.	Wahoos	181
12.	Chiefs	150

Just U-Bob's luck to have his team finally hit stride just when the season is about to end. With 358 points during Week 26, the **Tribe** was able to cement its 11<sup>th</sup> place finish ahead of the **Pirates**. Since this was one of the conditions for employment as B.T.'s top henchman, U-Bob can wipe his brow and look forward to weekly paychecks for at least one more season. Of course, the more important condition of employment was finishing *behind* the **Chiefs**, which the Tribe pilot was able to manage with relative ease.

With their anemic 150-point final week, the **Chiefs** guaranteed themselves a Lower Division finish, finishing well off the **Blues'** pace as the 6<sup>th</sup> place team in the league. I have not yet had a chance to look, but I'm guessing that the Chiefs' 150-point total for Week 26 was the lowest in the league all year, and maybe even cracked the All-Time Bottom Ten.

### SUMMARY OF FINAL FINISHES

Thanks to Linda K. for providing us with her annual summary of final finishes in the Hot Stove League, dating all the way back to our sacred origin in 1985. And as is customary, I hereinbelow provide you with a few observations and comments about notable owner accomplishments and achievements, both good and otherwise:

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stead of the less meaningful number of total points. By way of rationale, the final major league standings are based upon wins and losses, and not team batting averages, team ERA, etc., and so it only seems fitting to follow the lead of our forefathers. For purposes of next year's draft, it has been proposed that Tirebiter and I flip a coin to see who drafts fourth, in lieu of our deadlock. All in favor, say "Aye." Aye.

- ▶ Starting at the top, **Possum's** 1<sup>st</sup> place finish in 2000 is his third title overall in the sixteen years of Hot Stove League competition, only his first in the Live Ball Era. Possum joins **Big Guy** and **Itchie** in the elite category of thrice-winners of the whole enchilada, although it can't be forgotten that his first championship team was selected via proxy by none other than your humble scribe of *From the Bullpen*. Possum joins Itchie, **Tricko** and yours truly as the only managers to win league titles in both the Dead Ball and Live Ball Eras, and is the third manager to accomplish this with multi-monikerred teams. Ku-Ku-Ku-do-do-dos, Wa-Wa-Wa-hoos!
- ▶ The **Reds** are well on track on their three-year rebuilding program, rising from 11<sup>th</sup> in 1998 to 4<sup>th</sup> in '99 to this year's bridesmaid finish. Next year, another Cup? Fat chance. For the record, **Tricko** garnered his seventh money finish (top three) in thirteen years of competition, but his first since 1994, the tainted strike year.
- ▶ Painful though it is to point out, the **Skipjacks** came relatively close to defending their 1999 crown, notching their first 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish. The Skipjacks completed their fourth money finish in thirteen years of play, and their seventh in the Upper Division.
- ▶ The hard-charging **Senators** nearly made it up into a money position, but still finished in the Upper Division for the ninth time in sixteen years of play. In exactly half of those years, this proud franchise has finished in the top three teams in the league. If this season had been about two weeks longer, it would have been nine for sixteen.
- ▶ The **Crimson Chirpers** overachieved their way to their first-ever 4<sup>th</sup> place finish in the HSL, coming darned close to finishing in the money for the first time since 1997. Remarkably, this culturally-challenged league manager has now finished in the Upper Division for the seventh time in eight years of play. I guess if you're born and raised in Iowa, you've got to have some form of compensation in this world.
- ▶ **Stretch's Blues** tumbled to 6<sup>th</sup> place after seeming assured of a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> place finish just a few weeks ago. On the plus side, Stretch earned his fourth Upper Division finish in the last six years, after eight consecutive years of finishing in the Lower Division. On the minus side, he is still drafting behind the **Senators** next year, and that won't bode well for him.
- ▶ The **Chiefs'** sorry finish in 7<sup>th</sup> place amounted to their ninth Lower Division finish in sixteen years.

**B.T.** ended his string of consecutive 2<sup>nd</sup> place finishes at two.

- ▶ The **Tigers** finished in 8<sup>th</sup> place for the first time ever, their sixth Lower Division finish. Not to focus on the negative, but this is the ninth straight year that the **Tigers** have not finished in the top four in the league, extending their streak of never having finished in the money during the Live Ball Era (and not since 1991).
- ▶ The **Bombers** managed to finish in the third quartile of the league, definitely a positive. On the other hand, this was the Bombers' eighth consecutive Lower Division finish, precisely the number of years they have been in the league. Looking on the bright side, **Mouse**, this is exactly how long it took **McBlunder** to get his act together before bolting up to 4<sup>th</sup> place in his ninth year of competition.
- ▶ The **Cubs\*** found their way back in the Lower Division for the first time since 1997, but their tenth time overall in sixteen years of play. **Shamu's\*** charges finished in 10<sup>th</sup> place for the third time in history.
- ▶ The **Tribe** extended their string of futility to fifteen consecutive seasons without a Top Two finish. The Tribe finished in 11<sup>th</sup> place for the first time ever, their lowest spot in the HSL standings since finishing dead last in 1988. The Tribe scored 7908 points during the 2000 campaign, the third time in the past four years that the Tribe's final tally has been in the 7900s. Coincidence? I think not.
- ▶ And then, the **Pirates**. **SloPay's** charges slumped to their fifth cellar finish in eight years of BJFB competition. After finishing in the Upper Division five times in his first six years of play, SloPay has gone into an eight-year funk. But hey, pal, somebody has to finish last.

## THE LANGUAGE OF BASEBALL

"It's a good thing that Rojas held Ventura up, because Jim Edmonds fired a *seed* down the third base line and Ventura would have been toast."

Ahh, the breathtaking beauty of the language of baseball. Listening to last Saturday's Cardinals-Mets playoff game, Charlie Steiner uttered this perfect baseball line while announcing on ESPN radio. "Fired a *seed*." You have to love it. I am gaining a whole new

appreciation for Charlie Steiner this postseason, as he and Dave Campbell are doing a terrific job of calling the games.

## PROJECTIONS/OUTCOMES

I dug out our preseason projections of final finishes. Here they are, next to each team's actual finish:

Team	Projected	Actual
Chiefs	1	7
Skipjacks	2	3
Cubs*	3	10
Senators	4	5
Tigers	5	8
Tribe	6	11
Pirates	7	12
Redbirds	8	4
Wahoos	9	1
Reds	10	2
Blues	11	6
Bombers	12	9

Our prognosticators came close on the **Skipjacks** and **Senators**, but missed the mark wildly with the **Chiefs**, **Reds** and **Wahoos**.

## YAZ

I'm enclosing a wonderful article from the November issue of *Baseball Digest* on Carl Yastrzemski, recounting his magnificent 1967 Triple Crown year. Take a look at what the Yaz did in the final twelve games of the 1967 pennant race (23 for 44, 5 HR, 16 RBIs, 14 runs scored—this includes going 7 for 8 in the final two games of the season). What a great, great year.

## ROCKET'S RED GLARE

And finally, how about the Rocket in last night's Game Two of the World Series. Has anyone seen more intensity from a pitcher? Coming off of his one-hitter in the American League Championship Series, I will put Rocket's last two postseason games up against just about any two in history. Any arguments?

Keep the faith.

More soon.

Skipper