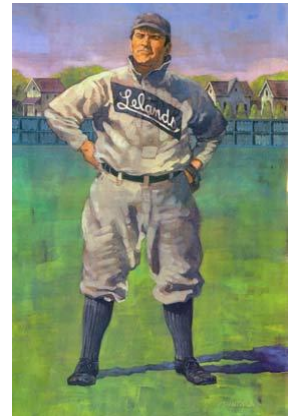

FROM THE BULLPEN

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2001 Season

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SKIPJACKS EXPLODE FOR 507 POINTS, CAPTURE 5TH PLACE; ITCHIE'S SIGHTS SET ON WAHOOS

TRIBE SPRINGS OVER TIGERS INTO 4TH PLACE

SENATORS SQUEEZE BY REDS AND INTO LEAD

Brethren:

The front-page news for Week 23 was the eye-popping performance of Itchie's late-charging **Skipjacks**, who mustered up a 507-point performance during Week 23. Capped by Bonds's three-jack day at Coors Field on Sunday, as well as continued sparkling performances by new team ace Javier Vazquez, the **Skipjacks** blasted past the **Cubs*** and the **Tigers** and into sole possession of 5th place, with the 4th place **Tribe** and 3rd place **Wahoos** squarely in Itchie's sights. Although not yet confirmed, circuit scuttlebutt from the rumor mill has it that Itchie has been touting his R.J.-for-Vazquez, Bonds and Giambi trade with Possum as the "most one-sided trade in the history of the Hot Stove League, and maybe in the annals of baseball history." Calls placed to the Bridges Investment Fund for comments from his luckless trading partner have not been returned.

With a mere three weeks to go in the 2001 campaign, the league standings through games of September 9 are as follows:

WEEK 22 STANDINGS

1.	Senators	8278
2.	Reds	8262
3.	Wahoos	8191
4.	Tribe	7859
5.	Skipjacks	7780

6.	Tigers	7763
7.	Cubs*	7759
8.	Blues	7523
9.	Pirates	7430
10.	Redbirds	7424
11.	Bombers	6941
12.	Chiefs	6401

After Itchie's surreal total of 507, the **Tribe** posted the second-best performance during Week 23 with 459 points, vaulting the **Tribe** past the **Tigers** into 4th place. The third highest total for Week 23 belongs to Tirebiter's angry little pack of snapping and snarling muskrats, who are determined to beat out the slumping **Pirates** for that coveted 9-hole in next year's draft. Bully for you, Tirebiter. It appears that your trademark persistence and tenacity may make up for what you lack in true baseball acumen and generalized cerebral firepower.

The **Cubs***, still with a dog in the hunt for an Upper Division finish, managed a hefty 389 point total for Week 23, good for the fourth-best total in the circuit. Unfortunately, the saves cap will soon have a voice in his team's ability to finish this season somewhere other than the Lower Division.

The **Senators** used a lackluster but still fifth-best weekly total of 332 points to gain just enough ground to slip past the **Wahoos** and **Reds** in the standings, but only because of their anemic weekly totals of 239 (**Reds**, eleventh-best for the week) and 219 (**Wahoos**, dead worst for the week). I would have much preferred a 400+ week from the Kings of Capitol Hill, but same was not in the cards.

The Week 23 totals, up and down, went like this:

WEEK 23 POINT TOTALS

1.	Skipjacks	507
2.	Tribe	459
3.	Redbirds	397
4.	Cubs*	389
5.	Senators	332
6.	Tigers	321
7.	Pirates	296
8.	Bombers	267
9.	Blues	264
10.	Chiefs	245
11.	Reds	239
12.	Wahoos	219

The league MVP through 23 weeks is still Luis Gonzalez, now with 794 points. However, if I understand the Bill James system, Barry Bonds would actually be the league MVP if he had not been traded to another team, as he is listed as having 791 total points through Sunday on the computer, which would not include, I do not believe, the 30 bonus points for his Sunday hat trick and his 10 points for the All-Star game, which would bring his total to 831.

The league's Cy Young is now listed to be Curt Schilling of the **Senators** with 621 points. However, as with Bonds, if R.J. had not been traded, he would be listed as the Cy Young leader with 663 points *and* God-knows-how-many bonus points for 15+ strikeout performances, of which he must have at least three or four.

The top hitting squad through 23 weeks continues to be the **Wahoos** with 5386, a fair amount ahead of the 2nd-place **Tribe**'s total of 5244 in spite of the self-induced evisceration of the **Wahoos**' batting lineup by virtue of the trading away of Bonds, Giambi and Bret Boone. The **Chiefs** continue to trail the pack in hitting performance with 4168 points, just behind the **Bombers**' 4207.

The top pitching team through Week 23 is still the **Senators** with 3419 points, a cool 300+ ahead of the **Skipjacks**' second-highest total of 3086 and the **Reds**' third-best total of 3037. The **Chiefs** staff also trails the pack, with their 2233 pitching points a shade worse than the **Pirates**' 2287 total. This in spite of the **Chiefs**' stellar composite win-loss record of 64-39, a winning percentage of .621, which is unrivaled in the league.

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

HITTING¹

1.	Barry Bonds	791
2.	A-Rod	770
3.	Sammy Sosa	759
4.	Luis Gonzalez	755
5.	Todd Helton	707
6.	Bret Boone	695
7.	Robbie Alomar	664
8.	Rich Aurilia	654
9.	Shawn Green	642
10.	Jason Giambi	638
11.	Lance Burkman	632
12.	Juan Gonzalez	620
13.	Larry Walker	611
14.	Jeff Bagwell	608
15.	Manny Ramirez	606
16.	Jim Thome	604
17.	Albert Pujols	600
18.	Brian Giles	592
19.	Chipper Jones	582
20.	Vladimir Guerrero	575

Although I'm only listing the top 20, you might be surprised to know that No. 21 is the invisible Bobby Abreu, with 570 points, who has quietly put together an outstanding year and a point total which exceeds those posted to date of Piazza, Palmeiro, Delgado, Kent, Jeter, Glaus and Bernie Williams, to name a few. I don't even know whose team he is on, so little attention has he attracted from me. Until now.

PITCHING

1.	Randy Johnson	663
2.	Curt Schilling	612
3.	Mariano Rivera	517
4.	Greg Maddux	506
5.	Roger Clemens	477
6.	Javier Vazquez	474
7.	Robb Nen	471
8.	Tim Hudson	468
9.	Chan Ho Park	462
10.	Armando Benitez	459
11.	Mike Mussina	447
12.	Mark Mulder	442
(T)	Keith Foulke	442
14.	Freddie Garcia	440
15.	Matt Morris	431

¹ Not including bonus points.

16.	Jon Lieber	428
17.	John Burkett	424
(T)	Troy Percival	424
19.	Jamie Moyer	421
(T)	Ichiro Suzuki	421

In terms of points scored per game, R.J. of course leads the pack with 21.4 PPG, followed by Schilling with 19.7. Maddux is third with 16.9, and Clemens is fourth with 16.4. No. 5 on the PPG list, with players having at least 400 starting pitching points, is none other than ex-**Senator** Lee Harvey (Oswald), who was snookered away from the **Senators** by the cagey U-Bob, in exchange for the ever-disappointing Johnny Damon, who has done somewhere between diddly and squat for the **Senators**.

DUGOUT CHATTER

✓ It will be interesting to see if the **Wahoos** can recover from their dizzying drop over the past two weeks, which has seen almost no offensive performance from the **'Hoos**, and a near-total breakdown of Possum's pitching staff. With Pedro in the hurt locker and likely to be shelved for the season, and with the Big Unit likely to be rested a bit for the playoffs², the **Wahoos'** pitching hopes are tied to the likes of Andy Pettitte, Brandon Duckworth, Jason Jennings, Russ Ortiz, Tony Armas, Jr., and Matt Morris. Given their recent woes, the immediate future don't look bright for the **Wahoos**.

✓ With the **Reds'** two-week total of almost 1000 points during Weeks 21 and 22, it should have come as no great surprise that there would be a bit of a drop-off in the offing. However, a drop down to 239 points during Week 23 was probably more than Tricky anticipated. Can the **Reds** re-ramp up during the final three weeks so that Magpie can etch his name on the Cup for a third time? Probably so, but only if the homer caps don't do too much damage, and only if Magpie can figure out which of his ten starting pitchers are going to be hot in the stretch run and avoid the dreaded shell game syndrome. It will definitely be interesting.

✓ As for the **Senators**, I've been receiving so many Kisses (of Death) from well-meaning (I'm sure) team owners that I ought to be wearing a prom tux and boutonniere. My only hope is to get Jeter healthy again soon, to get Bagwell, Helton and Sele off the schneid,

² Although with Nolan Ryan's season strikeout record plainly in reach, Brenley may have some tough calls to make.

and to hope that a pissed-off Carl Everett can finally turn it on now that the Red Sox's playoff hopes are virtually nonexistent. Thank God the trading deadline is finally past, and U-Bob can no longer fleece me of any remaining starting pitchers.

✓ Speaking of my recent trade gaffes with U-Bob, more than a few of you were poised to cry "foul" when I picked up Bagwell for Mays, Weaver and Derrek Lee on the eve of the trading deadline. You need to know that the trade was proposed by U-Bob and accepted by me prior to midnight on August 31, and that it was the fault of the boys at Bill James that the trade was not approved until after the Labor Day weekend. Just as soon as the ink was dry on that transaction, Bagwell promptly sat out one game and then went 0-for-5 with an error in another, while Joe Mays and Dream Weaver promptly twirled winning gems for the **Tribe** (their first wins in months, it seems) and Derrek Lee went Yard in his first appearance as a **Tribesman**. So there.

✓ Much speculation has developed about whether U-Bob will change his views on the importance of pitching at draft time, now that he has purloined his way to a stellar pitching staff and is poised for a 4th or 5th place finish, the **Tribe's** highest in decades. Bob's strategy of drafting nothing but buzzsaw home run hitters and top-line middle-relievers would seem to be a serviceable strategy. So long as you are content to finish in 4th or 5th place, that is.

✓ This year's crucible-hot pennant race between the **Reds**, **Wahoos** and **Senators** during the sunset weeks of the league evokes memories of 1999, when the **Chiefs**, **Skipjacks** and **Cubs*** were locked in a Texas death match to the finish that eventually saw the **Skipjacks** finish on top by the narrowest of margins on the season's last weekend. Personally, I could do without a white-knuckle finger-biter during Week 26, and would be perfectly content to see the **Senators** erupt during Weeks 24 and 25 and coast to victory. Not that I'm predicting same, mind you, but if the baseball gods should have this in store, there would be no argument from the **Senators** camp.

✓ Apart from the little matter of the pennant race, it will be fun to see if Barry Bonds can hold up under the vise-like pressure that will certainly be applied as he chases Big Mac's 70-HR mark. Until his turkey at Coors Field on Sunday, I didn't think he had Tricky's chance at the barber shop for a good outcome, but with twenty

games remaining to hit eight home runs, I'm starting to think that lovable old Barry might be able to do it. Couldn't happen to a nicer guy, or to a nicer HSL owner.

✓ Whether Barry gets the jack mark or not, he is almost a shoe-in to finish the season with a slugging percentage of greater than .800. As previously pointed out in this venerable rag, this would be an achievement of Ruthian proportions. We will revisit this at season's end.

✓ In looking over last week's transactions, I see that Itchie ditched Junior Spivey (sounds like a journeyman pro bowler) for Mike Young, beating the **Senators** out of this plum pick. Damn it all. Who cares if you finish 7th, 6th, 5th, or 4th, Itchie, stop crapping in my mess kit, will you?

✓ I also note that Big Guy picked up something called a Jeremy Fikac to replace his once-beloved Jose Lima. I couldn't begin to tell you what position Fikac plays, nor what team he is on or even what league he is in. You 4th through 7th place guys care way too much about way too little.

✓ A final note about the transaction wire. I didn't see any moves by the **Bronx Bombers** which has to be the first time in about eight years that Mouse hasn't drafted four or five new slugs to replace four or five old slugs, or made four or five promotions and four or five demotions. For a guy lodged in 11th place with no chance of moving up or down, you are one heckuva busy manager, Mouse. *Busy* obviously doesn't equate with *good*, as demonstrated by your place in the standings, but by golly, you're giving it the old college try. Capital E for effort, old boy.

ALL-TIMERS

With Itchie's and Magpie's recent forays into the 500-point stratosphere, let's revisit and update our list of the Top Seventeen weekly team performances of all time in the HSL, last published in June of 2000. Here's the new Top Seventeen:

TOP SEVENTEEN HSL WEEKS

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>Week Ending</u>
1.	598	Reds	08/25/01
2.	551	Blues	05/31/98
3.	537	Blues	08/16/98
4.	529	Blues	04/29/01
5.	527	Senators	08/24/97

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>Week Ending</u>
6.	526	Reds	07/03/94
7.	520	Reds	06/30/96
8.	517	Bombers	04/30/00
(T)	517	Chiefs	07/09/00
10.	514	Senators	04/29/01
11.	507	Skipjacks	09/09/01
12.	505	Redbirds	07/26/98
13.	504	Reds	07/25/99
(T)	504	Skipjacks	07/25/99
(T)	504	Wahoos	07/02/00
16.	503	Reds	07/04/99
17.	502	Tigers	07/22/01

Some observations:

It's remarkable that the **Reds'** all-time total of 589 points is 38 points more than the second-highest total.

It's remarkable that the **Blues** hold the three next-highest totals, given their limited record of success in the Hot Stove League, although two of the three came from that magical 1998 season.

It's remarkable that the **Reds** have five of the seventeen highest weekly totals, and that between the **Reds** and the **Blues**, eight of the top fifteen weekly totals.

It's remarkable that the **Cubs***, a former HSL champion, has never cracked the 500-point barrier, while the titleless **Redbirds** and **Bombers** both appear on the list.

And finally, it is neither remarkable nor surprising that the **Tribe** and the **Pirates**, both still in search of their first title or runner-up finish, have never soared to the 500-point level. They are, however, well represented in the bottom ten, which will be revised and republished at a later date.

SWEET MUSIC

This edition of *From the Bullpen* comes to you courtesy of my Monday afternoon/evening drive to Springfield, Missouri, on Highways 71 and 13. My old friend, the car radio, kept me awake and alive as KMOX brought me the Cardinals-Brewers game in Milwaukee. Good Lord, how I love baseball on the radio. Even though I had to suffer through another lackluster performance by Jeromy "Ten Million Dollar Man" Burnitz, and even though I had to hear about Jon Lieber picking up another win for the **Reds** and Joe Mays pitching another beauty

for the **Tribe** as I drove, it's still hard to beat a mildly staticky ballgame during a late evening drive. One of life's great pleasures.

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Enclosed for your easy reference is an updated roster of Owners and Managers, with updates on e-mail addresses for Sir Charles and SloPay.

Skipper

Postscript:

This week's *FTB* was dictated before Tuesday morning's terrorist attack. Suddenly, winning our Hot Stove League seems like a pretty low priority. God save victims and their families; give our leaders wisdom and clarity of thought; and God bless America.