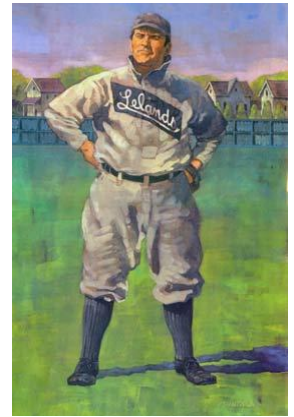


FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Publication of the Hot Stove League Eastern Nebraska Division



2001 Season

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REDS USE HIATUS TO LEAPFROG INTO 1ST; SENATORS' STEVE KARSAY JOINS THE BANISHED NEVER-EVER CLUB; POSSUM'S WA-HOOS TO CHANGE NAME TO WAH-WAHS

Welcome back to the real world, brothers in baseball. It's pretty weird to be in the thick of a heated pennant race -- or at least what *was* a heated pennant race -- and to not really be all that fired up about the last two weeks.

Okay, so I admit that I'm still looking at the box scores and logging on to Bill James Fantasy Baseball every day -- okay, make it twice a day -- but the September 11 tragedy truly has taken much of the joy out of what otherwise would be a barnburner of a pennant race. And by the by, it also took away two of Schilling's starts at venues other than Coors Field, screwed up the rotation so that he had to pitch at Coors Field when he otherwise wouldn't have; and gave Jon Lieber an extra start and an extra quality start and an extra bushel basket of points in that he pitched on September 10 before the hijackings and then again on the first night after play resumed. Not that I would compare my suffering from the terrorist tragedy with the suffering of so many thousands of others, but by golly, the Senators clearly took a hit. If Magpie wins this thing, an asterisk or footnote or obelisk might be in order.

WEEK 24 STANDINGS

1.	Reds	8671
2.	Senators	8598
3.	Wahoos	8527
4.	Tribe	8252
5.	Cubs*	8192
6.	Skipjacks	8077

7.	Tigers	8060
8.	Blues	7908
9.	Pirates	7888
10.	Redbirds	7764
11.	Bombers	7260
12.	Chiefs	6631

How 'bout them **Pirates** cranking out 458 points to put some breathing room between the **Buccos** and the **Redbirds**. How can a crummy team like the **Pirates**, mired in 9th, crank out 458 points while my 2nd-place **Senators** can't seem to crack the 400-point barrier? One of life's great mysteries.

The **Cubs*** had the second-best Week 24 with 433 points, putting them ever closer to the **Tribe** which had a very fine week of its own with 393 points. And did I mention that home run caps and all, the **Reds** managed 409 points during Week 24?

The sagging **Tigers** and **Skipjacks** tied for the second-worst point total during Week 24 with 297, as they vie for the final Upper Division spot.

The **Senators** continue to lead all teams in pitching points with 3528, while the **Reds** are in 2nd with 3256. The **Wahoos** lead all hitters with 5574, while the **Chiefs** trail the pack with 4308.

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

HITTING

1.	A-Rod	830
(T)	Barry Bonds	830
3.	Sammy Sosa	809
4.	Luis Gonzalez	783
5.	Todd Helton	751
6.	Robbie Alomar	708

7.	Bret Boone	701
8.	Rich Aurilia	687
9.	Lance Burkman	678
10.	Shawn Green	670

PITCHING

1.	Randy Johnson	703
2.	Curt Schilling	640
3.	Mariano Rivera	530
4.	Greg Maddux	512
5.	Freddie Garcia	509
6.	Roger Clemens	494
(T)	Armando Benitez	497
8.	Javier Vazquez	489
9.	Mark Mulder	475
10.	Keith Foulke	472

THIS WEEK IN BASEBALL

What a week this is shaping up to be, as teams jockey for final position. A-Rod continues his torrid second half, edging ever closer to the 50 home run mark as he propels the **Reds** toward the title. Joe Mays, **ex-Senator**, continues to shine and win and score for the **Tribe**. U-squared finally picks up a save for the bitter Possum. Jeromy Burnitz goes Yard three times for the **Senators** to finally earn bonus points for my point-starved team, and on the same night and in the same game, Richie Sexson matches the feat for the **Reds**, who by divine intervention had Sexson in the starting lineup for one of the few times all year. Possum picks up Randy Wolf in the free agent draft and he promptly throws a one-hitter. The **Reds** edge ever closer to the RBI cap, but continue to pile on mooglie-booglie pitching points.

With a little over a week to go in the season before this issue goes to press, it's shaping up to be a real nail-biter. If only to be in the hunt for that final weekend, what more could a guy ask?

THE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION OF MAGPIES

Tricko floated a trial balloon past me this week on the phone which merits serious consideration. Magpie's proposal is that we consider donating all league winnings to the Red Cross or some other charity to be given as disaster relief. My immediate reaction was, great idea, so long as the **Reds** finish in 1st. Just kidding. It's some-

thing worth considering no matter who wins this thing and who finishes in 2nd, so long as I get my championship apparel no matter who is making the donation.

The satanic cynic in each of us might think that instead of pure-hearted benevolence, Magpie is merely trying to cut a deal with the Baseball Gods to cement a 1st place finish in this heated pennant race -- kind of like the guy who gets in a tight fix and pledges to join the priesthood or at least to refrain from all original sin if only he finds a way out of the jam. Not that I doubt his sincerity one bit, but we'll have to see how Father Tricko feels about all of this when the season is over and it's time to write out the check.

NEXT YEAR: IRON CITY?

Last Friday I paid a visit to PNC Park in Pittsburgh with Jason Kendall's heir apparent, Will "Who Needs a Stinking Catcher's Mask¹" Ernst, my second scion. I was positively juiced² as I sat in Section 120 between home and third with a spectacular view of the downtown Pittsburgh skyline, just across one of them three rivers. It is an absolute jewel of a new ballpark, and I can't quite figure out why it's gotten so little national fanfare. Not only that, but with the NFL/caveman mentality of the good people of Pittsburgh, they can't even sell out the dang place even in its inaugural year. Will and I got our most excellent seats for only five bucks over face value, and just about all of our row was vacant for a Friday night game against the Cardinals in fair weather. Go figure.

In any event, if U.S.Air is still in business next summer, and if they still have a direct, nonstop flight from Omaha to Pittsburgh, my vote is for a two- or three-day junket to Pittsburgh and Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Baltimore, or, what the heck, just Pittsburgh. Chew on that for eight or nine months, will ya?

On the subject of HSL Trips, after September 11 of this year, they will never be the same. If we all decide to travel with Itchie by air, we'll have to set aside an extra seven or eight hours each way for the inevitable strip search. Alternatively, we can send *the man of a hundred*

¹ The boy's grape is as hard as getting a kitchen pass in the Bontrager household.

² As well as literally.

*nationalities*³ on ahead with the same fifteen-passenger van that we had last year in Milwaukee. As much as Stretch stuck us for on that one, we must have the free use of it for four or five future HSL Trips. Can you even imagine the scrutiny our poor Brother Itchie is going to face in his business and pleasure travels during the next year or two? He may have to start a new career as a shepherd.

CLOSING

This will be the final issue of *The Bullpen* until the end of the season, in all probability. Good luck to you, Tricky, to you, Possum, and to the rest of you who are fighting for a one-better draft slot for March 2002.

God bless America.

Skipper

P.S. For those of you who are no longer receiving e-mail, I am providing herewith a recent e-interchange with the league Madman, Possum. A potential future Exhibit A in the Possum conservatorship proceedings. Enjoy.

*From: Ted Bridges
9/24/2001 8:50:27 AM*

Far be it from me to whine, as I dangle a tantalizing 150 points off the pace with 12 or so games to go. But it dawned on me, that for a guy who has played 3 closers since 8/31 (the date of my Urbina for Tino Martinez trade with Bone Dada), I just have not accumulated very many saves. So I checked, and since 8/31, my 3 closers, who had totaled 81 saves thru the first 5 months of the season, had a total of 5 (FIVE!!) thru yesterday. That is 5 total, between 3 guys, in 42 games played by their teams. Kansas City admittedly sucks, but is 4 and 10 in September. Boston also sucks, but amazingly, has gone from about 15 games over .500 to barely over .500 on the back of a 4 and 10 month. And Sasaki at Seattle got me 2 quick saves after I picked him up from BD, but has literally gone since SEPTEMBER 2 without a save, as Seattle either wins big or loses. I hate this game. Did I mention that the stock market is down every day since August 31---2000? WHW TB

From: Dave Ernst
Sent: Monday, September 24, 2001 8:59 AM

As our beloved BT has been known to say: Life isn't always ferret.

Suck it up and quit the whining. Fix your team and go with it. Fix the fund and make us some money.

Any questions?

DDE

*From: Ted Bridges
Date: Monday, September 24, 2001 9:19 AM*

I think I over-fixed it, because of the point caps, which are insane. There is no justification in reality for the caps. In real life, no one says, hey Bonds has never hit more than 45 HRs, so we'll give him 50, but after that the rest don't count. Dusty Baker ain't out trading Bonds and Kent to pick up a starting pitcher to avoid some arbitrary offensive statistical limit.

Home runs cap for a 12 team league should be 316. If it had been 316, I would not have traded both Bonds and Giambi. Vazquez and Johnson would have been close enough for a push. I'd still be 150 points ahead of Pirnie, based on hitting points. The math on that is that Bonds has 239 for Johnny, Giambi has 134, and Vazquez has 165, for a total of 538. Johnson has 181, so I am down 357. I am currently at 301 HRs, so with Bonds and Giambi, I'd be over by now, but barely, if 316 was the limit. Say I am 10 over, so minus the 50 or so excess HR points, and I would be about 150 AHEAD of Pirnie at this juncture. Add in the 200-300 points Pedro cost me, and another 200 for the dif between Garciparra and Alex Gonzalez, and you can see that it would not even be CLOSE. But, really, I am not bitter. After all. Literally every trade I made has not worked out well, and all the trades were designed to beef up pitching because my hitting was on target to go well beyond HR and RBI limits. The odds of those three closers getting only 5 saves over 42 team games had to be extremely long. WHW TB

³ Excluding Sweden, Norway, Germany and Denmark, of course.

