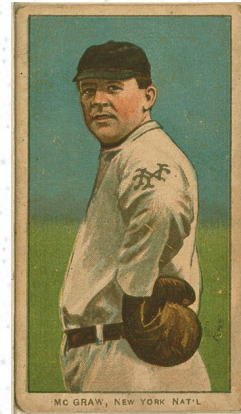


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# From the Bullpen

## Official Publication of the Hot Stove League

### Eastern Nebraska Division



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2002 Season

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Brethren:

With six inches of snow on the ground and the gloom of a sunless winter day in the air, I thought what better way to elevate the spirit than to crank out a *Bullpen* and talk a little baseball.

And what better way to start than to bring up the fact that the funnest day of the year, HSL Draft Day, is a mere six weeks away from this coming Saturday. Ponder the anticipation and excitement as you cogitate over your draft strategy, and deliberate over such weighty issues as: (1) Is Pedro's right wing healed up? (2) Is Bonds, coming off the greatest HSL season ever, back to being first-half-of-the-first-round material? Second half? (3) Will Junior get it together and return to star status? (4) Can I-Rod shake the injury bugaboo? (5) Will Juan make any friends in Texas, and will they make him wear a circa 2525 Jetsons outfit? (6) Will an offseason's worth of psychotherapy repair Kim's shattered ying and yang? (7) Will Phil Nevin make it back on the Senators' roster for another season-ending hat trick? (8) Can Clemens steal enough starts from Father Time to get his 300th win? Only in the fullness of time will we have the answers to these critical questions.

And of course, there are many questions about our league membership, as well: (1) Can Skipper parlay his first-round draft status into a team capable of repeating for the first time since the 1987-88-89 **Tigers**, a first-ever repeat in the Live Ball Era? (2) Will Mouse again draft a team of near championship timbre, only to mismanage them into the latrine? (3) Will Possum's remaining gray matter be ample to compete in this hypercompetitive league? (4) Will we

have to move the Draft to the Madonna Nursing Home in Lincoln to allow U-Bob to participate? (5) Will SloPay be identified as David Hunter's "strawman" silent partner? (6) Will Itchie bring us all Pemmican beef jerky from the Gas N Stop from his customary visit on the drive in? (7) Will B.T. realize that Cal Ripken and Tony Gwynn are now retired? (8) Can we ply BT with enough liquor to get him to up his wager this year to title to the 56th and Holdrege Runza flagship? (9) Will Itchie soon be working there as apprentice fryer, or as assistant to the assistant (U-Bob) at Art FX? (10) Has Magpie finally recovered from the contracoup he suffered on the mean streets of Los Angeles in '93? (11) Will Big Guy finally break his twelve-year skein of "bad luck"? (12) In what round will McBlunder make his annual *mistaken identity* gaffe? (13) Will Tirebiter guzzle more or fewer than the 15 ales he swilled at last year's draft? And of course (14) Will this be the year that Shamu finally gets to shake off the asterisk that clings to him like the scent of Brut?

These, and many more, probing questions will be answered to your complete satisfaction on

**SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2002**

As always, this year's Draft will be at the Gaines Pansing & Hogan War Room. We will start at 1:00 p.m., sharp, and continue until concluded. Be there, or be nobody.

### **MOCK DRAFT**

Though I wasn't personally present to verify its authenticity, I am dutybound to report the results of

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this year's first statistically significant mock draft, held on Wednesday, January 24, 2002, with six HSL members (all Omaha HSLers sans me) present and participating. Here's what this brain trust came up with:

Team	Rnd 1	Rnd 2	Rnd3
Senators	RJ	Piazza	Hudson
Reds	A-Rod	Garciparra	Pujols
Red Sox	P.Martinez	R.Alomar	Giles
Skipjacks	Helton	M.Ramirez	Mulder
Tribe	Giambi	Bagwell	L.Gonzales
Cubs*	Schilling	V.Guerrero	Kent
Tigers	I-Rod	L.Walker	Berkman
Blues	Mussina	Griffey	Clemens
Pirates	Bonds	Maddux	Glaus
Redbirds	Sosa	C.Jones	Zito
Bombers	K.Brown	B.Williams	M.Alou
Chiefs	Jeter	Suzuki	Morris

Comments: First, I make no guarantee that the Big Unit will be the first pick in the first round of the Draft. Maybe he will, maybe he won't. A-Rod on a supercharged Rangers offensive squad may be simply too tempting to resist. On the other hand, great pitching beats great hitting every time. Except for Gonzo against Mariano in the bottom of the 9th of Game Seven, that is. On the third hand, if I take RJ in the first, I might have Piazza or I-Rod or Jeter or Bagwell available in the second, which are some absolutely intoxicating possibilities to ponder. Secondly, my prediction for the first round of the mock draft landed very close to the mark. The first four were identical. Beyond that, I had Piazza and Bagwell going in the first, while the mock draft took Giambi and Sosa instead. I hope to heck that someone else does take Sosa in the first so I don't have to pull the lever on him in the second, guaranteeing an end to his automatic 50 HR, 150 RBI years.

Thirdly, I could be wrong, but I don't see Suzuki, Punch and Judy hitter that he is, going in the second, and I don't see Pujols or Glaus or Zito going in the third round. Beyond that, I don't have much of a problem with the Mock Draft. Looks pretty much right on, but you will have to judge for yourself whether the mock draft results are reliable, helpful, or even of passing interest, and govern yourselves accordingly.

## OPENING DAY

The real first day of the new season will be Monday, April 1, 2002. I had hoped to line up a family junket to Detroit to see Comerica Park on Day One of the 2002 season, but the wife is taking the boys to Mexico for spring break and this will clash with my anticipated travel plans. That's my main gripe, although the Tigers aren't opening at home this year anyway.

So here's the plan. I suggest that we load up a SUV full of HSLers from Nebraska to drive down to Kansas City to see the Royals in action on Opening Day, akin to our 1999 Opening Day trip to the city of ... -- what is Kansas City's nickname, anyway? -- our beloved Stretch McBlunder, whereat we saw the skies miraculously open up for the singing of the National Anthem and the majestic arm of one Pedro Martinez pitching for the visiting Red Sox. True, we'll be watching the Minnesota Twins play and LaTroy Hawkins ain't no Pedro Martinez, but at least we'll see some baseball and have cold beer to drink and nothing else really matters anyway.

Who's with me?

## NUMBERS DON'T LIE

Just ask Samuel Clemens. But anyway, because of my pure love of statistics and numbers, I have once again gone back and looked up the season-ending point totals for players picked in the 2001 Draft, just to get a look at how things might have turned out differently if no transactions were conducted after Draft Day. By the time I got through fifteen rounds, it was late, I was tired, half in the bag (it's no fun to do it without a few cocktails along the way), and I couldn't find quite a few of the slugs who were picked in the bottom part of the Draft, so my conclusions, at least for now, are only based on fifteen rounds.

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<sup>1</sup> I don't count the Angels game on Easter Sunday as a true opener. Sacrilege.

<sup>2</sup> Since I will be running a day care service that week, let me know if you have any curtainclimbers you want to drop off for a couple of days at a time. No, I insist.



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At any rate, here are the standings based upon gross point totals only for the players taken during the first three rounds of the Draft:

### FIRST THREE ROUNDS

1. Tribe	2283
2. Reds	2172
3. Senators	2152
4. Skipjacks	1888
5. Tigers	1637
6. Pirates	1598
7. Blues	1588
8. Bronx Bombers	1556
9. Redbirds	1414
10. Cubs*	1338
11. Wahoos	1335
12. Chiefs	1211

Amazingly enough, U-Bob had the best first three rounds of the Draft, again based on gross point totals only, again, while drafting in the eleven-hole. His picks of Bagwell, Sosa and Larry Walker got him 2283 hitting points, or would have, had he held on to all three of them for the whole season. Of course, you say, there isn't a pitcher in the bunch, so the "standings" through three are skewed. And you're right. But that's not my point. My point is that U-Bob had a whale of a first three rounds of the Draft, and if he hadn't coughed up a lung later, his squad would probably have been in contention for their first-ever title.

Allow me also to point out that the **Reds**, drafting second, also took three non-pitchers during the first three rounds, and ended up with 2172 gross points through three. And this team in the end came within a single Phil Nevin at-bat from winning the league in 2001. Notice also that Possum was eleventh on gross points through three, because of injuries to Pedro and Nomar, yet was still able to compete vigorously for the title because of solid drafting in later rounds and savvy management. Note also that B.T. was destined for a crummy season from the get-go, by drafting the later injured I-Rod and Griffey and the underperforming Darin Erstad as his first three selections. So as it turns out, B.T. saved himself a bunch of dough by just packing it in after Draft Day, after all. Like he needs to save dough.

### FIRST FIVE ROUNDS

Carrying the same concept out through five rounds, here are the mythical standings based upon season-end point totals for each team's first five picks of the 2001 Draft:

1. Reds	3008
2. Skipjacks	2887
3. Senators	2881
4. Tribe	2859
5. Bronx Bombers	2703
6. Wahoos	2629
7. Redbirds	2577
8. Cubs*	2538
9. Pirates	2481
10. Blues	2474
11. Tigers	2293
12. Chiefs	1982

Conclusions: The **Reds** had a damned fine first five rounds of the Draft, as did the **Skipjacks** and **Senators** and **Tribe**. The rest of you were digging yourselves holes of varying depths out of which later you would find it difficult to dig.

Where the fun really starts, for my money, is in the analysis of rounds six through ten, where the men start to separate themselves from the she-boys of the league. Here are the point totals for each team for the five players selected in rounds six through ten:

### ROUNDS SIX THROUGH TEN

1. Cubs*	2781
2. Bronx Bombers	2383
3. Blues	2342
4. Reds	2319
5. Redbirds	2282
6. Wahoos	2108
7. Tigers	2098
8. Skipjacks	1965
9. Senators	1959
10. Pirates	1951
11. Chiefs	1554
12. Tribe	1084

Yes, friends, that says **1084**, for the **Tribe** for Rounds 6 through 10. U-Bob took Johnny Damon

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sixth (400), Fernando Tatis seventh (68), Kris Benson eighth (0), Pat Burrell ninth (437), and Rusty Greer tenth (179), for the unthinkable 5-round total of 1084, or about 217 points a man on average. This, my friends, was a mental blackout from which U-Bob would simply never recover, notwithstanding his brilliant selection of Rich Aurelia (727) in Round 15. You want to talk about blood clots in Bob's body, when you think about the massive intracranial hemorrhage that must have been going on in Bob's grape during Rounds 6 through 10 last March, you have to wonder how he even survived.

And look at Shamu's\* six-ten round total of 2781, composed of Edgar (552), Foulke (501), Stewart (514), Lofton (368) and Gonzo (846). With that kind of savvy middle-round picking going on, you wonder how Shamu\* didn't win the whole thing in 2001.

Let's then look at the composite totals for Rounds 1 through 10:

#### THROUGH TEN ROUNDS

1. Reds	5327
2. Cubs*	5319
3. Bronx Bombers	5083
4. Redbirds	4859
5. Skipjacks	4852
6. Senators	4840
7. Blues	4816
8. Wahoos	4737
9. Pirates	4432
10. Tigers	4391
11. Tribe	3943
12. Chiefs	3536

Through ten, whether they knew it or not, the **Reds** and **Cubs\*** had drafted powerhouse teams, while the **Bombers** were definitely in the hunt. On the other hand, the **Tribe's** disastrous Rounds 6-10 caused U-Bob to slip almost to the bottom of the maypole.

#### ROUNDS ELEVEN THROUGH FIFTEEN

Things got much better for the **Tribe** in Rounds 11 through 15, and the **Chiefs** also began to climb out of their early-Draft funk. Here are the gross point totals for the five players selected for each team during Rounds 11-15:

1. Tribe	1888
2. Wahoos	1801
3. Senators	1776
4. Chiefs	1638
5. Bronx Bombers	1635
6. Tigers	1534
7. Redbirds	1479
8. Blues	1324
9. Skipjacks	1266
10. Pirates	1160
11. Reds	1124
12. Cubs	1118

As may be seen, the **Cubs\*** had a **Tribe**-like five-round slump during Rounds 11-15, and the **Reds** and the **Pirates** fared only a titch better. It only goes to show that you can't let down for even a round in a seriously competitive league.

#### FIFTEEN ROUND TOTALS

Here, then, are the composite totals for the first fifteen players taken by each team in the 2001 Draft:

1. Bronx Bombers	6718
2. Senators	6616
3. Wahoos	6538
4. Reds	6451
5. Cubs*	6437
6. Redbirds	6338
7. Blues	6140
8. Skipjacks	6118
9. Tigers	5925
10. Tribe	5831
11. Pirates	5592
12. Chiefs	5174

Poor old Brother Mouse. If only the Draft had ended after fifteen rounds, and if only trades and free agent drafting were not part of our league system, 2001 might have been the year that the **Bronx Bombers** etched their name on The Cup for the first time. But then came the rest of the Draft, and then came Milwaukee, where the Jack and the Beanstalk fable became a bitter reality for Mouse.

Enjoy chewing on the numbers, and thinking about what coulda, woulda, shoulda.

Next week: Rounds 16 through 26.

## **BOTTOM OF THE 9<sup>th</sup>**

In closing, *FTB* sends out birthday greetings to both Brother Itchie (February 3) and Tirebiter (February 11), and here's wishing all of you a most productive Draft preparation season.

Skipper

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