



THE BELLYFLOP

**Special Edition of
From the Bullpen**

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Guest Editor: Underbelly

Troops:

Finally the season is here. Thanks go out to Skipper for his annual predictions. I'm sure he spent as much time on it as we did. It's amazing how much you can write about 12 teams in less than a minute. But it sure seemed like he spent a lot of time on Shamu's* leg, didn't it?

I know this is a little early to be hearing from *The Bellyflop*, but I thought you might be interested in seeing the odds that some of us face as we start what will be the Hot Stove League's 18th season.

I take my role as senior loser very seriously. I know Denny, Tirebiter and Mouse look to me to guide them down the path of wrong decisions, free agent gaffes and that general malaise that only the truly incompetent can possess or appreciate.

I found it interesting that Skipper picked SloPay to finish 2nd, when Vegas said that odds of SloPay winning the Hot Stove League are greater than him being involved in a knife fight with Barbra Streisand, and losing.

The odds of Mouse winning are greater than if he changed his name to Mohammed Mouse and became a Pashtun spiritual leader (if he can get the time off work).

Tirebiter's odds lay somewhere between him becoming the top driver for the Pelican Jerky Nascar team, and maintaining a clean credit rating. So he's out.

My odds aren't any better. They fall in-between me getting my Craftsman One Pull lawn mower to start somewhere between the 50th and 60th pull, and getting my piece of shit Honda snowblower to cough

What makes our club so exclusive is the fact that once you leave you may never come back, although it looks like Stretch, Shamu* and B.T. evidently have had second thoughts. Sorry, boys, no more loser lunches in the back room of Little Kings for you. Tough it out and act like you belong.

Las Vegas has just released the odds of winning the Hot Stove League with few surprises. The usual suspects head the list, but you might enjoy seeing the uphill battle that some of us face.

over once. I've even threatened to drag it into the house to meet the washer and dryer, who operate with a steely resolve each and every day, 365 days a year, hoping to intimidate or embarrass it into working. In fact, there is a much better chance of seeing Denny reoperate from his knife wounds and sprint to the championship, or Mohammed Mouse converting the employees at Thermal King to Islam, or Tirebiter enjoying a tickertape parade down 6th Avenue in New York City than me getting my lawn mowed or my driveway cleared, yet alone win the Hot Stove League.

This year was going to be different. I embraced the "pitching is everything" philosophy like a gorilla latching onto an old tire. I was fully expecting to walk up to the board and cough up Schilling's name on draft day. I didn't expect to be faced with the Solomonesque decision regarding Pedro's health, but there I was, buying a Beta VCR instead of a VHS, an 8 track tape player instead of a CD player, taking a right turn on the race track instead of the traditional left. So my brief love affair with pitching is sadly over, not because I'm jealous of watching Bonds smack homer after homer, but because after Tuesday's games I checked the standings and noticed that Ted was leading with 120pts and I had minus 4.5pts. MINUS 4.5pts! My 90lb beaner with the bad wing cost me -14pts, and he was immediately followed off the cliff by Robert Person and Jarrod Washburn. I had more points on a cold January night with no baseball in sight than I did after four grueling hours of drafting and the season in full

swing. And I still have snow on my driveway and I can't get my lawn mowed. But these are our problems, not yours.

On a up note, I'd like to welcome Jeff into the league. It looks like his services will be needed early. With Scott being involved in the *Krause Brothers vs. Bishop Bruskewitz* lawsuit, it looks like he will be flying solo until that messy matter is resolved. But it does explain a lot of things, doesn't it?

Well, that's it. I guess we have to do the best with what we have. So pull all the wagons around in a circle. Indians or no Indians, we're gonna have a square dance.

Ubelly

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