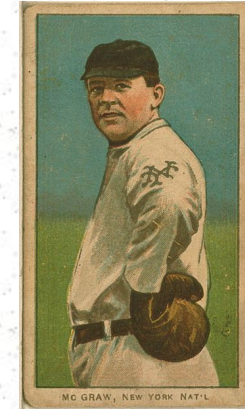

From the Bullpen

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Hot Stove League

Eastern Nebraska Division



2002 Season

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CUBS* COME BACK TO PACK

TRIBE PROCLAIMS PEDRO HEALED, MAKES CASE FOR UPPER DIVISION BERTH

NOT EVERYTHING "DUCKY" FOR SENATORS, BUT BIG UNIT FANS 17 ROCKIES TO LIFT SENATORS

PESKY JAX STILL HANGING AROUND

REDBIRDS LOOKING INTO ROTISSERIE LEAGUE BASS FISHING

Brethren:

Just when we thought the **Cubs*** and **Reds** were going to leave the rest of us high and dry, the **Baby Bears** and the **Commies** cooled down and allowed the rest of us to catch our breath and catch up a bit, or at least most of us. With a Week 3 point total of only 293 for the **Cubs***, Shamu* saw his once-sizable lead on the field shrink like B.T.'s manhood while barefoot on a cold tile

The aforementioned **Senators** used Sunday's masterful 17-K performance by Randy Johnson to post a 415-point Week 3. Coupled with his decent win earlier in the week, RJ is now 5-and-0 and at 164.5 points, the top point-getter in the league and the top pitcher point-getter by almost 50%, way ahead of Glavine's 100 points. If only Mr. Duckworth hadn't doused himself with rocket fuel and then jumped in the line of a flamethrower halfway across the country in Pennsylvania, the **Senators** would now be in at least second place, if not riding atop the circuit. RJ could undoubtedly smell burnt duck fifteen states away in Arizona, and knew that he would have to turn it up a notch to keep the **Senators** in the competition.

The **Skipjacks** are in 4th place through three weeks with 1106 points, after a 408.5 week for Itchie's boys. To tell you the truth, I don't really know who it is that is scoring all of these points for the Jax, as I do not recognize many (any?) of Itchie's boys on the individual leader boards. Chalk it up to generalized managerial savvy, I guess.

floor, and now has four competitors within 100 points of his team. With only 293 points for the week, there was only one team, the lowly, sickly, **Crimson Corpses**, who scored fewer points during Week 3. After three weeks of play, the **Cubs*** have a 42-point lead over the second-place **Reds**.

The second-place **Reds** used a red-hot, resurgent A-Rod (now with 118 points, second best in the league) to maintain their No. 2 spot in the standings. However, with only 346.5 points for the week, fifth best in the league, the **Reds** are now only 5 points ahead of the third-place **Senators**, and only 40.5 points ahead of the persistent **Skipjacks**. Whether this was a sign of things to come, or merely a one-week hiccup in a long season, we shall have to wait and see.

Adjusting our binoculars down to the Lower Division, we find the **Whinin' Wahoos** in 7th place with 1012 points. With a still-underperforming Todd Helton, some substantial pitching woes, and a few problems with injuries (quit yer bellyaching, Possum, we've all got guys that are hurt; your guys just need to learn to play hurt, that's all), the **Wahoos** could manage only 294.5 points for the week, the third lowest in the league. Boo-hoo. On the other hand, you're only 200 points out of 1st, so keep it

The **Bombers** managed 355 points during Week 3, fifth best for the week, to maintain their spot in the Upper Division, and with 1190 points are fewer than 100 from being in the lead. I haven't seen Mouse since Draft Day, but I'm guessing that he's had that perpetual grin on his face from Day One of the season. Whether he's doing it with smoke and mirrors or strings and glue, it don't matter for him right now because he is officially *in the hunt*.

Our last team in the Upper Division this week is the long-suffering Tribe. Nobody seems to understand how, but this team managed to cobble together a 431.5 week – tops in the league by 16.5 points – and has skipped past the free-falling **Wahoos** and into 6th place. I know that Pedro had a decent week and that Berkman continues to sizzle for the **Tribe** (I think he's on the **Tribe**), but I don't see too many other names on this roster that strike me as being red-hot. We'll see if the **Tribe** can repeat this performance in weeks to come, or whether this was the **Tribe's** Andy Warhol week.

WEEK 3 STANDINGS

Upper Division

1.	Cubs*	1188.5
2.	Reds	1146.5
3.	Senators	1141.5
4.	Skipjacks	1106.0
5.	Bombers	1090.0
6.	Tribe	1036.0

Lower Division

7.	Wahoos	1012.0
8.	Blues	976.0

in perspective.

Stretch's boys managed 402.5 points for the week, scampering past the flagging **Tigers** and **Chiefs** and ahead of the **Pirates** and into 8th place during Week 3. Could be that keeping Bonds healthy for the season may be important for the **Blues**, do you think?

In 9th place are the **Tigers**, who scored 311 points for the week and now have 947.5 points on the year, just an eyelash or two ahead of the **Chiefs** and **Pirates**. Because of those damned **Redbirds**, my DAL prediction for the **Tigers** won't come true this year, but they've got one heck of a shot at finishing the season in the penultimate position.

The co-managed **Chiefs** appear to either be over- or undermanaged these days, with this squad only able to muster up 295.5 points for the week, second lowest for the week. Not that it's time to push the panic button or anything, but any team that hopes to be competitive cannot sustain too many of these sub-300 weeks.

In 11th place stand the **Pirates**, who put together a decent week (345.5 points), but still have a long way to go to live up to its Draft Day billing.

In the cellar again this week we find the **Redbirds**, who not only occupy the bottom rung of the ladder again, but also had the fewest points for the week once again. It looks like Tirebiter is trying to establish some sort of new league precedent, that of having the lowest-scoring team for all 26 weeks of the year. With 279 points for the week, the

9. Tigers	947.5
10. Chiefs	922.5
11. Pirates	920.0
12. Redbirds	751.1

WEEK 3 POINT TOTALS

1. Tribe	431.5
2. Senators	415.0
3. Skipjacks	408.5
4. Blues	402.5
5. Bombers	355.0
6. Reds	346.5
7. Pirates	345.5
8. Tigers	311.0
9. Chiefs	295.5
10. Wahoos	294.5
11. Cubs*	293.0
12. Redbirds	279.0

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Hitters

1. Barry Bonds	121
2. I-Rod	118
3. Torii Hunter	108
4. Jim Edmonds	101
(T) Vladimir Guerrero	101
6. Manny Ramirez	100
(T) Carlos Delgado	100
8. Kenny Lofton	99
9. Alfonso Soriano	97
(T) Scott Rolen	97

'Birds found themselves even deeper in the outhouse, now more than 400 points out of 1st and closing in on 200 points out of 11th. Other than that, Jimmy, you've got a helluva season going on.

Pitching

1. Randy Johnson	148
2. Tom Glavine	100
3. Livan Hernandez	97
4. Mark Buehrle	95
5. Eric Gagne	94
6. Mike Mussina	90
7. Eddie Guardado	89
8. J.C. Romero	87
(T) Mike Williams	87
10. Curt Schilling	86

DUGOUT CHATTER

- ◆ It was only a matter of time before A-Rod got hot. This guy is so good that I can't believe he's not going to win the Triple Crown one of these days, probably the same year that he wins a Gold Glove at shortstop. A Hall-of-Famer for sure.

- ◆ I see that Tirebiter filed for divorce from Chuck Finley almost simultaneously with Chuck's filing to ditch the Kitten. I guess negative 25 point implosions and savage attacks to the ankles will do that kind of thing, but I was kind of hoping that everyone could patch things up so that the Peroxide Man could stay on the **Redbirds'** roster.

- ◆ Speaking of implosions, my beloved **Senators** have already suffered through three of them, one for each of the first three weeks of the season. First it was Keith

- ◆ I suspect that U-Bob was the happiest man in the league last week, what with his team's 400+ performance, the resurgence of Pedro, and more significantly, the humiliating pummeling absorbed by Curt Schilling in his first loss of the season. Hey, we all need affirmation.

- ◆ The free agent wire has been about as hot this year as I can ever remember, although so far it looks like it's been much ado about nothing. Other than Gagne, who is the top closer with 94 points, and Livan, who is the third-highest scoring starting pitcher with 97, I don't believe that there are any other free agents who are riding high among the individual leader boards. But keep up the good work!

WEB REMINDER

For those of you who have not yet logged on to the official HSL website (HEY, YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE), the website address is:

www.nebraskahsl.com

Tune in and turn on, or whatever they used to say at Woodstock, or Berkeley, or wherever.

Skipper

Foulke, who gassed and torched himself to the tune of about minus 23 during the first week of the season, from which he and I are both still reeling. Then in Week 2 it was Matt Anderson, who took it upon himself to perpetuate the Detroit Tigers' winless streak by giving up four earned runs without recording a single out, a Moonwalk Sonata which cost the **Senators** something like 26 points to the bad; and then finally it was Mr. Duckworth, who as aforementioned was the designated team arsonist for Week 3. But for those three pummelings (each of which resulted in more than 20 negative points for the **Senators**), I'd be staring at Shamu* in the rearview mirror.

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