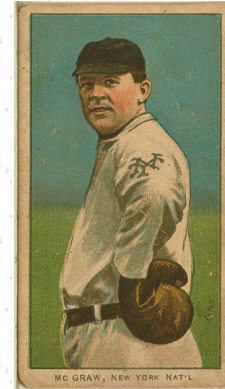

From the Bullpen

Official Publication of the

Hot Stove League

Eastern Nebraska Division



2002 Season

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CUBS* BACK IN SADDLE AGAIN

SKIPJACKS RECEDING FASTER THAN ITCHIE'S HAIRLINE

WAHOOS A BUNCH OF YA-HOOS

REDBIRDS JUST BELOW PLANKTON ON FOOD CHAIN

Brethren:

Week 5 of the Hot Stove League was a snapshot of the parity which describes the league this season. Eleven of the twelve teams in the league scored between 305 and 381 points, a spread of a lousy 76 points, the equivalent of one greasy outing from your 20th or 22nd round draft pick, like a Derek Lowe or an Odalis Perez. The spread between the third highest scoring team in the league this week (the **Tribe** with 351) and the 8th-highest scoring team (the **Pirates** with 341.5) was a miniscule 9.5 points,

That said, Shamu's* **Cubs*** are back in first place once again, utilizing a mini-slump by the **Reds** to slip back into the lead. The **Skipjacks**, who snuck into first place for about ten minutes in the middle of last week, slumped from Wednesday to Sunday and dropped back down to third place on their way to fifth or sixth. The **Wahoos** have dropped back into ninth place and are threatening to supplant the **Pirates** in the ten hole. The rest of youse can find your current place in the standings below.

WEEK 5 STANDINGS

Upper Division

1.	Cubs*	1898.5
2.	Reds	1883.5
3.	Skipjacks	1818.0
4.	Senators	1786.5
5.	Bombers	1728.0
6.	Tribe	1711.5

Lower Division

7.	Tigers	1641.0
8.	Blues	1614.5
9.	Wahoos	1611.0
10.	Pirates	1590.0

which means that half the teams in the league scored within 9 points of each other. No team scored over 400 points, and no team -- whoops, make that only one team -- scored under 300 points. True parity.

Only the lowly **Crimson Chirpers** failed to score at least 300 points, and in fact, they couldn't even make the 250 mark. The **'Birds**, with 247 points for the week, are doing their level worst to drag down the per-team average of this proud league. This dismal franchise has managed to fall more than 550 points behind the league-leading **Cubs*** in only five weeks of play, a story of futility unrivaled in recent history.

The league MVP of the year is the *en fuego* Lance Berkman of the **Tribe**, who now has 187.5 points, more than A-Rod, Sosa and Bonds. He also leads the majors in home runs with 13 (tied with Sosa) and in runs batted in, with a whole bunch.

In spite of missing a start because of his Nervous Nelly manager and trainer, the Big Unit continues to lead all pitchers with 191.5 points.

The top hitting team in the league through five weeks is the **Reds** with 1189 points, followed by -- to my amazement -- the **Senators** with 1169.5 points. This was a team built on pitching, not hitting, but perhaps I have been giving myself too little credit on my ability to draft a good-hitting team.

11. Chiefs	1466.0
12. Redbirds	1336.0

WEEK 5 POINT TOTALS

1. Blues	381.0
2. Cubs*	375.0
3. Tribe	351.0
4. Senators	350.0
5. Wahoos	347.0
6. Skipjacks	346.0
7. Chiefs	343.5
8. Pirates	341.5
9. Reds	332.0
10. Tigers	307.0
11. Bombers	305.5
12. Redbirds	247.0

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Hitters

1. Vladdy	185
2. A-Rod	183
3. Sosa	167
4. Bonds	162
5. Berkman	158*
6. Lowell	157
7. Manny	154
8. Floyd	151
(T) Hunter	151
10. Vizquel	144
11. Junior Spivey	141
12. Edmonds	134
13. Batista	133
14. Soriano	133
15. Uribe	132

On a points-per-game basis, A-Rod leads with a clip of 6.1 PPG, followed by Vladdy

At the other end of the totem pole, you will find the **Redbirds**, whose hitters have totaled 905 points in five weeks, well behind the **Chiefs'** total of 974.5.

The top pitching team in the league is the **Skipjacks** with 826.5 points through five weeks, just ahead of the **Cubs*** with 821.5. Odalis Perez is averaging 23.8 points per game for Itchie's **Jax**, and has the fourth highest pitching total with 143 points. Derek Lowe is the fifth highest scoring starting pitcher with 131 points, for an average of 21.8 points per game. They're sure to keep up this pace. Itchie's stopper, Eddie Guardado, is the top closer with 134 points. I never would have guessed that Itchie would have drafted Odalis, Derek and Eddie in the first three rounds of the draft. Oh, that's right, he didn't. Eighteen, 20 and 22.

The feeblest staff thus far in the season belongs to the **Redbirds**, whose hurlers have only been able to total 431.0 points thus far, are about half of the Itchmeister's squad. The **Blues** have the second worst staff to date, with 740.0 points.

The Big Unit leads on a per-game basis with 29.1 PPG, followed by Odalis with 23.8 and Schilling with 23.1

HIGH CHEESE

◆ Shamu* has proffered the suggestion that I drafted Todd Zeile in this last week's free agent draft simply to keep him off of the **Cubs***' roster, and to prevent him from embarrassing the manager who initially drafted him, me. Damn right. I also tried to

with 6.0 PPG, followed by Bonds with 5.8 PPG.

Pitchers

1.	Randy Johnson	175
2.	Curt Schilling	162
3.	Tom Glavine	158
4.	Odalis Perez	143
5.	Guardado	134
6.	Lowe	131
7.	Eric Gagne	128
(T)	Danny Graves	128
9.	A.J. Burnett	126
10.	Oswalt	125
11.	Brian Lawrence	124
12.	Livan Hernandez	123
13.	El Duque	120
(T)	Byun-Hyun Kim	120
15.	Astacio	119

* 187.5 with bonus points included.

◆ In center field, Lance Berkman and Torii Hunter are both in the top ten in points scored. It used to be Griffey and Bernie and that was about it. More changing of the guard.

◆ I'd like to give some praise to McBlunder for having the top scoring team of the week with 381 points. Trouble is, for the life of me, I can't figure out who he has on his team that might have done well last week. What an absolute team of no-

get Cirillo and Tony Batista back in the **Senators'** fold these past couple of weeks, but that damn Tirebiter got in my kitchen on Batista (who absolutely sucked for me the first two weeks of the year, but is now the second-highest scoring 3rd baseman with 133 points) and the pesky owner of the **Irates** snapped up Jeff Cirillo ahead of me this past Sunday, now that Cirillo is *en fuego* and out to prove me an absolute fool for ditching him.

I also got aced out of getting Frank Castillo by U-Bob and was beaten to the punch on Mike DeJean by Big Guy. Drat. Stay out of my kitchen.

- ◆ Speaking of transactions, I see that Possum finally ditched Tony Clark (you can only tolerate a .161 hitter for so long) and Omar Dahl. I thought the ditching of Dahl was a bit curious since the guy is 3-and-0 with a 1.09 ERA, and at 95 points tied with Roger Clemens for 27th on the list of starting pitchers. Now that's a team with some tough criterion for being on the squad.

- ◆ The top five closers this season so far are Guardado, Gagne, Graves, Kim and Mike Williams. Did any of those guys even get drafted in the first fifteen rounds?

- ◆ The worst starting pitcher on anybody's roster through five weeks, in terms of points scored, is Joe Mays with negative 28. What, he's got some pictures of you in a compromising position, Big Guy? The second worst player on any roster is Chris Carpenter, who despite his negative 19 points in two outings still graces the roster of the **Chiefs**. Learn to let go, my friends.

names. On the other hand, a tribute to your managing brilliance, Stretch.

RED ALERT, RED ALERT

This just in. Patty Buser has put in a call for help, a desperate plea for his colleagues in the Hot Stove League to try to track down her missing husband,** our own Tirebiter. The details of his disappearance are sketchy at this point, but reliable sources have indicated that he was last seen at the Buser household last Friday, standing at his home mailbox with the most recent issue of *From the Bullpen* in his hands, tears running down his cheeks like the flooding Raccoon River in his native Iowa.

Apparently despondent over still being in last place in the HSL despite his team having by far its best weekly point total of the year, Patty has indicated concern over what the desperate Señor White might have done or still do.

Upon learning of his disappearance, one anonymous source suggested checking the bordellos in all of the Mexican border towns, while another suggested sending a scout party to a certain Gentleman's Club in Houston, while still another suggested a search of all Midwestern fish taxidermists for the missing Tirebiter.

Just as the helpful suggestions were flowing in, a report came in over the news wire service that a short, pasty guy had been spotted driving a stolen Cushman motor scooter mail delivery vehicle with bright yellow Hawkeye stickers plastered all over it, headed to Amarillo, Texas by way of Nebraska, Iowa and the Quad Cities. Please

◆ For a guy who's never had good catchers, I have the top two in points scored at this point in the season, Michael Barrett with 126 and Jorge Posada with 121. If anybody needs good catching, Barrett's available, but he will be expensive.

◆ There isn't a single 1st baseman in the top fifteen of the individual point leaders. Bagwell and Helton are tied for the lead with 123, followed by the Big Hurt with 120 points. What happened to those high-flying, high-scoring first sackers?

◆ Junior Spivey is leading all second sackers with 141 points, and a batting average of .342. Didn't this guy just get picked up, like, a week ago or so? So in other words, I could have had him? A day late and a dollar short.

◆ Mike Lowell of Florida is leading all third sackers with 157 points, sporting an obscene batting average of .379. The guy can hit some stick.

◆ There is a definite changing of the guard at shortstop. After A-Rod, the next four shortstops are Omar Vizquel, Juan Uribe, David Eckstein and Jimmy Rollins, all of whom are ahead of Derek Jeter and Nomar Garciaparra.

refer all further leads concerning Tirebiter to the Bureau.

THE TRIP

I will confess that I have done absolutely nothing to try to line up our trip to Pittsburgh on August 2-3. Is there anyone out there who would like to take this bull by the horns and get things moving? With my many professional, spousal, fatherly and coaching obligations this summer -- not to mention my attempt to master Sanskrit -- I just haven't been able to get on the stick to do anything about lining up the trip so far. Any takers?

*_*_*_*_*_*_*_*_*_*

Talk at you next week.

Skipper

** Nobody has yet thought to ask *why* she wants to track him down.

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