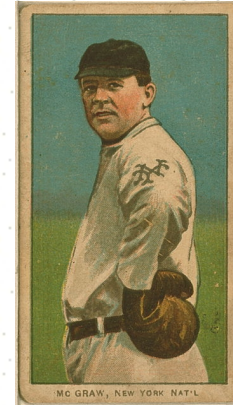


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# From the Bullpen

Official Publication of the  
**Hot Stove League**  
Eastern Nebraska Division



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2002 Season

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## **ITCHIE FEELIN GOOD ABOUT LEADING AT HALFWAY MARK**

## **ITCHIE IGNORES PERSONAL FINANCIAL STRAITS AND CRUMBLING MARRIAGE, STEELS JAW TO TASK AT HAND**

## **RETOOLED CHIEFS BREAK LOOSE FOR HUGE WEEK AND BREAK INTO UPPER DIVISION**

## **BLUES SAGGING WORSE THAN MAGPIE'S PECS**

## **REDBIRDS STILL IN CELLAR**

Brethren:

"I feel good!" Not exactly the words you would expect to hear from an unemployed and virtually unemployable middle-aged balding man of Middle Eastern descent with a wife about to put a contract out on him for trying to derail her gravy train, but these words were in fact heard emanating from the oft-flapping gums of our beloved Brother Itchie. And what the heck, why shouldn't he feel good coming off a 443.5-point week and taking a sizable lead over the 2nd place

In any event, Itchie is leading this thing at the halfway mark and looks like a good bet for the long haul. Here are the standings through thirteen weeks:

### **WEEK 13 STANDINGS**

#### **Upper Division**

1.	Skipjacks	4858.5
2.	Cubs*	4804.0
3.	Reds	4623.5
4.	Senators	4535.5
5.	Chiefs	4314.5
6.	Bombers	4273.0

#### **Lower Division**

7.	Tribe	4257.0
8.	Wahoos	4216.5
9.	Tigers	4069.5
10.	Pirates	4042.0
11.	Blues	4021.5
12.	Redbirds	3933.5

The top hitting team for through thirteen weeks is the **Senators** with 2890.5, with the **Cubs\*** (2810.0) and **Chiefs** (2806.0) running second and third. The **Wahoos** bring up the rear in this category with 2499.5 hitting points through thirteen.

The top pitching team is still the **Skipjacks** with 2081.5, followed by the **Cubs\*** with

**Cubs\***, even after absorbing weekend losses by Derek Lowe, Odalis Perez and Vinny Padilla, the last one a bruiser.

Spotted recently near Carter Lake wearing nothing but a turban, a wood barrel and a sign saying "Your Fortune Told for a Poker Chip," the irrepressible Itchie was still all smiles and in high spirits as he savored the prospect of winning his fourth (incredible as *that* may sound) HSL title and raking in \$800 in new money from his HSL brethren to finance his comeback. Which should last him about ten minutes at Harvey's.

After the **Chiefs**, the **Skipjacks** had the second-best week during Week 13 with 443.5 points, followed by the **Cubs\*** with 385.0 points and the **Redbirds** with 376.5 points. Next were the **Senators** with 362.0, then the **Bombers** with 360.5 points, and then the **Wahoos** with 353.5 points. In all, we had seven teams with more than 350 points during Week 13, a dramatic increase in offensive production over the past month or two of the season. Only the **Reds**, **Pirates** and **Blues** could not crack the 300-point barrier, with the **Blues** having the worst week in the league with 239.0 points. Ouch. One more week like Week 13 and the **Blues** will be occupying the league cellar while the **Redbirds** occupy the outhouse penthouse. It won't be long before the buzzards are circling around the Elongated McBlunder carcass, picking away for any remaining morsels. Hopefully, McBlunder is seasoned and savvy enough not to succumb to any disreputable rug merchants who might come knocking at his door.

Here are the Week 13 totals from top to bottom:

### WEEK 13 POINT TOTALS

1. Chiefs 478.5

1994.0. The **Blues** hold the bottom spot in pitching points with 1248.0, 51.5 points behind the eleventh place **Pirates**.

The hard-charging **Chiefs** used a league-best Week 13 point total of 478.5 points to vault past the **Tribe** and **Bombers** and into fifth place. Will their stay in the Upper Division be long and prosperous, or was Week 13 a blip on the radar screen which will correct itself with the passage of time? Could be that Jeff has stepped up the pace a bit in anticipation of mid-season performance reviews by his not-always-easy-to-please partner.

The league MVP through thirteen is Barry Bonds with 418.5 points, while the Cy Young leader is still Curt Schilling with 410.5.

### SAME TIME, LAST YEAR

Our leader through thirteen weeks last year was the despicable Possum, with 4854 points, followed by the **Senators** with 4787 and the **Reds** with 4480. The **Chiefs** brought up the rear with 3705 points, just a smidge under the **Redbirds'** total through thirteen weeks this season. Luis Gonzalez led the league in hitting through thirteen weeks last year with 500 points, while Randy Johnson led all pitchers with 375 points.

### INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

#### Hitters

1.	A-Rod*	419
2.	Bonds	409
3.	Sosa	377
4.	Alfonso	372
5.	Giambi	362
6.	Helton	361
7.	Green	350
8.	Berkman	343
(1)	Kent	343
10.	Vladdy	331
(1)	Larry Walker	331

2.	Skipjacks	443.5
3.	Cubs*	385.0
4.	Redbirds	376.5
5.	Senators	362.0
6.	Bombers	360.5
7.	Wahoos	353.5
8.	Tigers	343.5
9.	Tribe	319.5
10.	Reds	278.0
11.	Pirates	260.5
12.	Blues	239.0

12.	Vidro	330
(1)	Konerko	330
14.	Iejada	329
15.	Sweeney	323

\* I'm not sure why Barry Bonds was listed as the league MVP with 418.5 points, including bonus points, since A-Rod has 419. Maybe somebody can explain this to me.

### Pitchers\*\*

1.	Schilling	394
2.	RJ	373
3.	Gagne	352
4.	Glavine	340
5.	Odalis Perez	324
6.	Lowe	321
7.	Garcia	294
8.	Kim	291
9.	Colon	281
10.	Nen	281
11.	Graves	280
12.	Guardado	280
13.	Pedro	278
14.	Smoltz	271
15.	A.J. Burnett	267
(1)	Morris	267

### SHORT STOPS

❖ I know I haven't been reading the box scores as closely as I should be, but did I miss a game where Edgardo Alfonso had like seven home runs and two cycles or something? It looks to me like he came out of nowhere to move into the fourth spot for hitters with his 372 points, since the last time I looked he was well down the list. 'Gardo was one of those I was a day late and a dollar short on, having planned to snap him up just about the time that Magpie pulled the trigger. Not that the **Senators** need points at second base or anything.

❖ And talk about *en fuego*, Shawn Green

❖ The **Senators** continue to experience their chronic shell game problem with the pitching staff. As I was saying about Lilly, no sooner had I promoted him to the majors last Saturday (after long, agonizing thought) than he went out and got his rear end kicked but hard by the cross-town Mets. Coming off his strongest outing of his career, an 11-K shutout, and playing against the hated Mets, you would figure (or at least I did) that Lilly would put on an encore performance. The only core was the one taken out of his midsection by all of the frozen ropes hit up the middle by the suddenly superb hitting **Metropolitans**. And while Lilly was up getting beaten down, Quevedo was down (in my minors) getting up (in points that count not). This, my friends, is life in the Hot Stove League. Nobody said it would be easy.

❖ Gonzo has 308 points through thirteen weeks, third best among left fielders, and not all that bad unless you consider that last year at this time he had 500 points. A bit of a dropoff.

❖ My left fielder, Garrett Anderson, has the quietest 304 points imaginable. The guy is absolutely invisible in the box scores on a nightly basis.

❖ On Itchie's pitching staff you will find the Nos. 5 (Odalis), 6 (Lowe), 12 (Guardado), 17 (Halladay) and 20 (Padilla) ranked pitchers. Five pitchers in the top twenty, and where

was hitting about 230-something when he had his four-jack night back on May 23, and now he has 350 points, putting him seventh on the current list, without his 30 bonus points for hitting three home runs in a game. Shecky has been on an absolute tear for the last-place **Redbirds**, who can at least look back on the draft and say that they made one good selection that day.

❖ It looks like all Jeff Kent needed was a little butt-whopping by Barry and Dusty to get his motor running.

❖ When did A.J. Burnett pop up on the radar screen, and whose team is he on, anyway? I guess I could do the math, but I have a hard time understanding how he can have so many points with a mediocre 8-5 record and a good but not great NL ERA of 3.25.

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\*\* Not including bonus points.

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### UPDATE ON SKIPPER'S SHELL GAME

I believe all of you will be able to identify with this little tale of woe. So I come into the office late on Tuesday night after the kids are in bed, planning on knocking off a bunch of dictation so I can take part of Wednesday off to start getting ready for the 4th of July festivities. I tell myself that I am going to get through a couple of piles of paper and knock out a couple of hours of work before turning on the computer and checking out the box scores. The first mistake I made was turning on my computer when I got to the office, to check my e-mail messages for the late afternoon. The temptation was simply too great.

"Heck, it can't hurt to check out the ESPN

were they taken in the draft? Well, Itchie took Roy in the 15<sup>th</sup> round, Guardado in the 18<sup>th</sup> round, Odalis in the 20<sup>th</sup> round, and Lowe in the 22<sup>nd</sup> round. Padilla was taken in the free agent draft. This might seem like exceptionally skillful late-round drafting by the Itchmeister, until you realize that his first three pitchers taken were Mike Mussina (Round 1), Kevin Brown (Round 3) and Shane Reynolds (Round 12), none of whom are in the top twenty-five pitchers in the league. Can you say *blind pig*?

❖ I still can't believe the kind of year that Glavine is having, with 340 points and 1.75 ERA. This can't be the same Glavine that nearly ruined my life when he was a Senator a couple of years ago. The baseball gods have recreated him.

❖ Seeing that Gagne now has 352 points, I guess I should have followed through with that Specific Performance lawsuit that I was considering against the **Chiefs** and their Indian Giver co-manager. A card laid is a card played.

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But just look who Anderson faced in this game, why, it's Senator minor leaguer Ruben Quevedo, who tossed a 6 2/3 inning, seven hit, three earned run win for those pathetic Brewers. About 16 points left on the bench, as I see it.

This is my last year in this stinking business.

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Number of days since Possum was to have submitted his newsletter to Linda for publication as a Special Edition of *From the Bullpen*.

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scoreboard site for five minutes or so before I get started," thinks me to myself. "I'll just check and see how a couple of my players are doing before getting down to business and knocking out that dictation," pledges me to myself. But of course, I was unable to stop with one or two box scores, and my wondering eyes meandered over to the Brewers-Pirates box score to see how my starting pitcher Jimmy Anderson was faring against those godawful Brewers. Since a win by Anderson seemed almost to be a lock, I thought, *What the heck, let's take a quick peak.* And, oh, how the baseball gods punish me for taking that little peak.

To my horror, I found that Jimmy Anderson didn't even make it out of the first inning, giving up five hits, five runs, five earned runs and three walks in 2/3 of an inning, and of course, taking the loss. Minus 18 or 19, if my math is right. And of course, Jimmy was in my starting rotation.

Number of times that Possum has attempted to call and/or e-mail Skipper to apologize profusely for his lies, misdeeds, and generalized malfeasance and evil-doing.

### WHAT NOT

✦ It looks like the four horsemen of the apocalypse will journey together to Pittsburgh August 3-4 to carry on the proud tradition of the league Trip. Itchie has managed to find time in his busy schedule to line up what will undoubtedly be a blockbuster of a junket to the Steel City and PNC Park. How about a strong "attaboy" at Itchie for lining up this trip, and a hip-hip-hooray for McBlunder, Shamu\*, Itchie and Skipper for boldly going where no Hot Stove Leaguers have gone before. The rest of you suck.

✦ Overheard at Haymarket Park a few weeks ago: "Is that John Thielen? Good gawd, if he loses any more hair, he'll look just like Ben Kingsley!"

Later, dudes.

Skipper

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