
From the Bullpen

Official Publication of the
Hot Stove League
Eastern Nebraska Division



2002 Season

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BUSER'S 'BIRDS BUST LOOSE

MOUSE'S BOMBERS EXPLODE

ITCHIE AND COMPANY HEADING TO STEEL CITY

U-BOB'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH PEDRO AT END

Brothers:

In the *Truth is Stranger than Fiction* department, the long-time bottom-dwelling **Redbirds** led the entire Hot Stove League in points during Week 17, somehow mustering up the resounding total of 484.5 points. Even with Nomar as hot as a BIF* shareholder and new life from Mo Vaughn and Manny Ramirez, it is conceptually inconceivable that a team with this rotten of a pitching staff could even approach a 400-point week. True, Tirebiter's got a little *Black Magic* going on with new recruit Johan "Carlos" Santana on his staff, but even the most superlative legerdemain couldn't transform the likes of Park, Weaver, Rogers and Wolf into a passable major league pitching staff.

I think about it for just a minute. If before the week began somebody had asked you to set the odds of the **Crimson Chirpers** and the **Pinstripers** going 1-2 for the week with an average of more than 470 points a team, what do you suppose you would have said? About the same as Shamu* passing up a free slice of piping-hot Valentino's pizza? Or of SloPay taking the stage on open mike night at the Funny Bone and launching into a two-hour comedic filibuster? Or about the same chance as McBlunder being spotted on Draft Day smiling ear to ear, kicking up his heels and whistling *Zippity Do Dah*, or Itchie landing a job as a *Chippendale*** Or B.T. being spotted queued up in bathroomless Tiananmen Square for early entry into a Brittany Spears concert? Or U-Bob resting comfortably in someone else's seat in the front row of a baseball game, brow unfurrowed, not a damned care in the world?

You get the point. Pigs *will* be beaming through space before you see this happen again.

Sadly, our league's two most elevation-chal-lenged*** members have expended all that energy this past week and don't even have an Upper Division berth to show for it. Mouse's Kateers were able to claw their way

Nevertheless, it is what it is, and here's wishing that Señor White enjoys his day in the sun, so to speak.

As further proof that the world has been turned on its ear and that we are now in *bizarro* HSL territory, the second-best team during the week was the heretofore moribund **Bronx Bombers** with 459.0 points. And this with Roger Clements on the DL for that week, to boot.

* Bridges Investment Fund.

past the sagging **Scumcats** and capture seventh place in the league, while the **Tweety Birds** were able to rocket past the **Blues** and **Tigers** and into ninth, probably the highest position they will know this year. Here are the overall standings through seventeen weeks.

** I know, I know. This one's off the chart.

*** Although I've never specifically measured any of them, I think U-Bob has the dynamic duo by a centimeter or two, even *sans* coif.

WEEK 17 STANDINGS

Upper Division

| | | |
|----|-----------|--------|
| 1. | Skipjacks | 6360.0 |
| 2. | Cubs* | 6252.0 |
| 3. | Reds | 6217.5 |
| 4. | Chiefs | 5910.5 |
| 5. | Tribe | 5809.0 |
| 6. | Senators | 5730.5 |

Lower Division

| | | |
|-----|----------|--------|
| 7. | Bombers | 5639.0 |
| 8. | Scumcats | 5593.5 |
| 9. | Redbirds | 5431.0 |
| 10. | Tigers | 5270.0 |
| 11. | Blues | 5247.0 |
| 12. | Pirates | 5143.5 |

Once again there were many teams that were red-hot during Week 17, with five different squads surpassing the 400-point mark and three other teams between 343 and 383.5. On the other hand, there were four teams this week who could not even get over the 300-point hurdle, including the **Tigers, Blues, Senators** and **Scumcats**. Here are the Week 17 point totals from top to bottom.

WEEK 17 POINT TOTALS

| | | |
|----|----------|-------|
| 1. | Redbirds | 484.5 |
| 2. | Bombers | 459.0 |

The top hitting team in the league through seventeen weeks is now the **Cubs***, whose 3758 hitting points far surpass the hitting total of the slumping **Senators'** batsmen. The worst hitting team is the **Tribe** with 3411 points, but there are four other teams who are fewer than 70 points ahead of the **Tribe**. Amazingly, the gap between the best-hitting team and the worst is only 347 points, or less than 10%.

The top pitching team is still the **Skipjacks**, who now have 2733.5 pitching points, well ahead of the second-best **Reds** with 2502.5 points. The **Pirates** staff trails the field with 1685.5 points, more than 1000 points off the pace.

Individual Leaders

Hitters

| | | |
|-----|---------|-----|
| 1. | A-Rod | 573 |
| 2. | Bonds | 481 |
| 3. | Alfonso | 475 |
| 4. | Giambi | 472 |
| 5. | Kent | 456 |
| 6. | Berkman | 451 |
| 7. | Walker | 446 |
| 8. | Tejada | 445 |
| 9. | Sosa | 444 |
| 10. | Ordonez | 438 |
| 11. | Giles | 437 |

| | | |
|-----|-----------|-------|
| 3. | Reds | 430.5 |
| 4. | Cubs* | 424.5 |
| 5. | Tribe | 402.5 |
| 6. | Skipjacks | 383.5 |
| 7. | Pirates | 353.0 |
| 8. | Chiefs | 343.0 |
| 9. | Tigers | 273.5 |
| 10. | Blues | 269.0 |
| 11. | Senators | 268.0 |
| 12. | Scumcats | 248.5 |

The league MVP through seventeen weeks is still Alex Rodriguez with 591.5 points. A-Rod is so red-hot, and with Bonds sitting down for ten days, I can't imagine anyone catching Alex. I *knew* I should have drafted him this year.

The Cy Young leader is still Curt Schilling, now with 559.5 points, well ahead of my own beloved RJ with 469. Damn. I *knew* U-Bob should have taken Schilling.

| | | |
|-----|-------------|-----|
| 12. | Helton | 434 |
| 13. | Vladimir | 431 |
| 14. | GarciaParra | 425 |
| 15. | Hunter | 423 |

Pitchers

| | | |
|-----|-----------|-----|
| 1. | Schilling | 523 |
| 2. | RJ | 442 |
| 3. | Gagne | 421 |
| 4. | Pedro | 413 |
| 5. | Lowe | 406 |
| 6. | Smoltz | 398 |
| 7. | Zito | 398 |
| 8. | Colon | 384 |
| 9. | Nen | 374 |
| 10. | Moyer | 373 |
| 11. | Kim | 368 |
| 12. | Guardado | 367 |
| 13. | Halladay | 366 |
| 14. | Koch | 340 |
| 15. | Glavine | 336 |

WHO'S HOT - HITTERS*

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| A-Rod | 116 |
| Tejada | 105 |
| Magglio | 105 |
| David Ortiz | 102 |
| Luis Gonzalez | 102 |
| Manny | 95 |

WHO'S NOT

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Matt Lawton | 4 |
| Shawn Casey | 6 |
| Damian Miller | 8 |
| Jeff Cirillo | 11 |
| Javy Lopez | 12 |
| Darren Erstad | 13 |
| Richard Hidalgo | 13 |

WHO'S HOT - PITCHERS

CLUBHOUSE CHATTER

❖ I still can't believe U-Bob traded Pedro for Giles. I mean, I know Bob loves hitting and Giles is a hitter's hitter, but to trade off Pedro, a guy you would be lucky to have on your team one time in your HSL career, and just when he is really in the groove, seems illogical, if not downright stupid. But that's just one man's opinion. If trading off one of the best pitchers of all time in his prime for a perennial third or fourth round draft choice melts your butter, I say go to town.

❖ As you may have noticed, things aren't exactly going the **Senators'** way this season. For some reason, the baseball gods just don't seem to want a repeat champion. Every damn one of my hitters has been in about a two-week funk -- that's right, every one of them -- and my pitchers have been positively mediocre. It took getting Trevor Hoffman onto the **Senators** squad to earn

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Zito | 96 |
| Moyer | 95 |
| Schilling | 93 |
| Halladay | 86 |
| Redman | 85 |
| Millwood | 84 |
| Colon | 81 |
| Miller | 80 |
| Smoltz | 80 |

WHO'S NOT

| | |
|----------------|------|
| John Garland | (22) |
| Freddie Garcia | (16) |
| Odalis** | (9) |
| Ashby | (8) |
| CC and water | (7) |
| Benson | (7) |
| Weaver | (1) |
| UU | (1) |

* Last three weeks.

** One helluva trade, McBlunder, one helluva trade.

him his first and second blown saves of the year, while over in the American League, my new stopper Billy Koch was busy serving up a walk-off grand slam to A-Rod, which I had the absolute displeasure of watching from the ESPN Strikezone near the heart of Times Square in Manhattan, nearly spoiling our family vacation. Not that my Hot Stove League fortunes have any bearing on my parenting abilities or tendencies, mind you.

❖ After a thrilling subway ride which took our little Midwestern WASP family through one of the more racially diverse and socially challenged neighborhoods in Queens, we made it out to Shea Stadium last Friday to catch a Mets-Reds game. And let me digress for a moment. Here's why a work stoppage will mean the end of major league baseball as we know it: We paid 29 stinking bucks, face value, for four crummy seats in far away right field at Shea Stadium, and probably spent about a hundred bucks on food with hot dogs and pop, something like five bucks a throw, and beer, six-fifty. To see the Mets. To see them play the Reds. At Shea Stadium. With that kind of dough being charged to John Q. Public*** to see a major league game when the players aren't on strike, can you imagine the backlash if the players do go on strike and end up with even higher salaries and more feathers in their nest? The fan reaction will be unbelievable. I think Barry Bonds is wrong. I don't think we'll be back.

*** Or at Shea, Joey Q. Publiciano, or Jose Q. Perez, or Jugdish Q. Kabul.

My digression completed, let me continue with the story. So we're watching the game in the first inning, and Joe Jackson is cheering for the Reds and Will and I are cheering for

❖ The Big Unit finally got off the schneid, recording fifteen strikeouts last night in a complete game victory over the powerful Expos. I read this morning that he threw

the Mets and Cheryl is reading a Danielle Steel book. Anyway, after Pedro Astacio shuts down the Reds in the first inning, the Mets mount a rally in the bottom of the first and Will and I are our new-found friends from Queens are all chirping and cheering for a Mets rally, and sure enough, they load the bases and the Reds pitcher is sweating bullets. I'm thinking to myself that this guy on the mound doesn't even have his C game with him tonight, and that the Mets are going to knock him out of the game within an inning or two. I then figured out that the hapless moundsman for the Reds was my own Elmer Dessens, who was "dessen" me but good. Fortunately, Mo "Worser" Vaughn grounded into a third-to-home-to-first double play, and Elmer got out of the first inning with only one run, and ultimately got a no-D and escaped with very little damage. He may even have scored a positive point or two, which would be about par for the course for him.

❖ My first trip to Shea was pre-HSL when U-Bob and Terry Cole and I made our first trip to the Big Apple together, I'm thinking in September of 1981, perhaps. Anyway, I'm pretty sure we saw Ellis Valentine and Dave Kingman play that day, and I remember that our peaceful day at the bucolic ballpark was interrupted about every seven seconds by a thundering sonic boom from a jet flying into nearby LaGuardia. Shea was ugly then, and it's uglier now since they painted it bright blue. There is little doubt that it is the ugliest of the non-domed stadiums, and deserves to be flushed into a toilet in Flushing Meadows. And by the way, wasn't Rudy Giuliani going to get those fine Mets fans a new stadium?

❖ Speaking of Rudy, although I'm not quite the celebrity spotter that B.T. is,* I was able to figure out that the former mayor of New York was sitting two tables away from us at breakfast last Saturday morning in New

149 pitches. Wow. I guess that Brenly really is afraid to take him out. I read that Johnson has now struck out ten batters or more in a game 180 times, second only to Nolan Ryan's 215. Since Johnson has been averaging probably 15 decade strikeout games a year the past few seasons, he will likely pass Ryan for the lead in this distinction in the next three years or so.

❖ Bonds came off the disabled list and hit career home run No. 596 last night. Since we will see him play two games in Pittsburgh this weekend,** we might just see old Barry Boy crack the 600 home run barrier at PNC Park, just one more spectator accomplishment to add to our pedigree.

❖ I almost forgot to mention that one of the Mets who took Elmer to task in the first inning last week was Robbie Alomar, who was nice enough to wait until I was in my seat to swat out his career hit No. 2500. I'll say it before Scott does: I've got to be the only guy in the galaxy who has seen a perfect game, an unassisted triple play, Tony Gwynn's 2000th hit, Cal Ripken's 2131st consecutive game, Magpie's trip in Los Angeles, and now Alomar's 2500th career hit. What more could a guy ask for in a career?



And with that, we'll close the book on another issue of *From the Bullpen*. Thanks for your continued letters of encouragement, words of praise, accolades, kudos, etc. It's what makes this otherwise thankless job so worthwhile.

Skipper

** "We" meaning the four remaining league

York City, sitting in the exact same spot that Joe Jackson had been sitting in the morning before. I've always kind of liked the guy, but he made such a big fuss about wanting to get his picture taken with me that it really turned me off. Besides, what are washed up political hacks good for anyway?

❖ Okay, okay, I'll mention it. The **Chiefs** passed up the **Senators** and are now in fourth place. Or was that last week? Big deal, so what, who cares.

* He's the only guy I know who can spot Ally Sheedy from two resorts away, Michael Spinks hunkered down in a snorkel coat, or Carlton Fisk on a dead sprint from a block away.

members who paddle our own canoes, wear the pants in the family, call the shots, whatever you want to term it.

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