

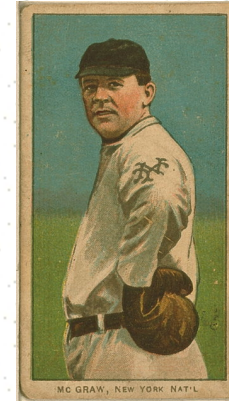
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# From the Bullpen

Official Publication of the

## Hot Stove League

Eastern Nebraska Division



2002 Season

Edition No. 25

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### **REDS STORM TO LEAD**

### **TRICKO PULLS OUT ALL STOPS IN FORGING 572-POINT WEEK**

### **SKIPJACKS "GLAUSED" GOOD BY COMMIES**

### **ETHEL BACKSTAGE WARMING UP**

Brothers:

Just when Itchie thought it was safe to start counting pullets, the magnificent Magpie cashed in all of his chits with the Baseball Gods and positively steamrolled the heretofore leading **Skipjacks** by putting up an unbelievable point total of 572.0 during Week 24 of the Hot Stove League season. Summoning superlative performances from each and every one of his starters, Tricko's charges were already on the way to a spectacular week when Sunday rolled around and with it Zito's masterful pitching performance and Troy Glaus' three-dinger

In any event, it looks like the last two weeks of the season may be a mere formality, and that Tricko is firmly poised to etch his name on The Cup for the first time since 1993.

That is, if we still have The Cup. The last time it was seen in an intact form, it was being handed to Possum to celebrate his championship in 2000. That's right, even though the Skipper won the 2001 crown more than fifty weeks ago, Possum neither showed up with The Cup for my crowning fete at Itchie's house on that black November day of the Colorado game disaster, nor did he bring it with him to The Draft in March of this year. Nor has Possum been able to make that grueling two-mile trek up to Regency One to drop off The Cup at my office ere these past six months. With any luck at all, Possum will get it to me in the next two weeks, so I will be able to enjoy it for another week or so after that before turning it over to Tricko.

Just one more reason that Possum is apt to find the southern half of a rigamortized

day.

Still reeling from the Huskers' pounding at the hands of the Nittany Lions, as well as his own recent shellacking by the crafty blackjack dealers at Ameristar, Itchie was already in a foul mood as his alcohol-soaked brain tried to process the additional bad news coming in over his computer on Sunday afternoon. A happy camper, he wasn't.

horse carcass in his office when he arrives at work one of these days. Hey, I don't watch the *Sopranos*, but I did see *The Godfather* trilogy.

But back to the business at hand, the standings:

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## WEEK 24 STANDINGS

1.	Reds	9048.0
2.	Skipjacks	8953.5
3.	Chiefs	8552.0
4.	Wahoos	8515.0
5.	Cubs*	8494.0
6.	Bombers	8250.5
7.	Senators	8166.5
8.	Blues	7912.0
9.	Redbirds	7903.0
10.	Tribe	7813.0
11.	Pirates	7418.0
12.	Tigers	7353.5

While the **Reds** scored the eye-popping total of 572.0 points for the week, one of the Top Ten performances of all-time in the Hot Stove League, Tricko's former law office cellmate, Big Guy, experienced a week that was at the other end of the spectrum. In their bid to cement their first-ever 12th place finish in the standings, the hapless **Tigers** mustered up a grand total of 184.5 points for the week. The darned near 400-point spread between the Week 24 point totals of the first and last place teams has to be a league record. Unless the pilot of the

## WEEK 24 POINT TOTALS

1.	Reds	572.0
2.	Blues	483.0
3.	Redbirds	413.5
4.	Wahoos	394.0
5.	Skipjacks	392.0
6.	Cubs*	345.0
7.	Senators	343.0
8.	Chiefs	272.5
9.	Tribe	270.5
10.	Bombers	249.5
11.	Pirates	245.0
12.	Tigers	184.5

The top hitting performer through 24 weeks is still A-Rod, whose 891.5 points for the season already promise him another spot in the top echelon of all-time hitting performances in the HSL, with two weeks to play. Randy Johnson, with his stellar 17-strikeout performance on Saturday, edged past teammate Curt Schilling to take over the top spot in the Cy Young race with 794.5 points. Similar to A-Rod, RJ's point total through 24 weeks assures him another spot in the top five all-time pitching performances in this league, with two weeks yet to go.

**Pirates** does some mighty drastic mismanaging these last two weeks -- which is, by the way, an obvious possibility -- the **Tigers** look like a shoo-in to occupy the league bowels during the 2002 offseason.

I forgot to record player point totals for other league players on Monday, so there will be no listing of top individual performances this week. Sorry about that.

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## THE ENVELOPE, PLEASE

Just as every stud baseball player needs a good nickname to cement his place in the annals of baseball history, all Hot Stove League owners and managers need a splendid sobriquet to ensure a spot in the history of our great HSL game. Now, therefore, it is time to bestow upon Jeff, the co-pilot of the **Chiefs**, his official league nickname.

Picking his nickname has not been the easiest of tasks for me since Jeff is so new to the league, and also because he did not go on the league trip and help the selection process by tripping over a curb and going face down or wearing a scratchy stocking cap or something like that. In fact, I had to enlist the aid of someone who knows him much better than I -- his co-owner -- to come up with a suitable nickname.

The old Skipper came to learn recently that Jeff attended his 25-year high school reunion this summer, at which time a photograph of Jeff from circa 1977 made its way around the circuit. Here is Jeff as he looked then:

While at least one astute observer immediately noted a striking resemblance between young Jeff and the dentist, Jerry, on the old Bob Newhart Show\*, others reportedly recognized that Jeff at 18 was pretty much the spitting image of one of the stars of a current television show, *Saved by the Bell*, whose name in the TV show is **SCREECH**. Here is a picture of the real Screech, so that you can be the judge:

I like *Screech*. Has a nice ring to it. And importantly, it isn't in any way flattering of our newest league member, which is mandatory for all league nicknames other than mine.

Congratulations, Screech, and welcome to the Big Show.

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\*

Jerry, the dentist.

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## SAME TIME, LAST YEAR

Through twenty-four weeks of last season, the **Reds** were in first place in the standings with 8671 points, a cool 73 points ahead of the **Senators** and 144 points ahead of the **Wahoos**. We all know what happened at the end of the season, with the **Reds** being Nevinized on the last weekend of the season to place the crown in the hands of the Skipper. Don't give up hope, Itchie, there is precedent.

## OUT IN LEFT FIELD

➤ If Tricko does win this thing, I think he should at least rebate to me a share of my \$100 payment to him. Without all of my Senatorial cast-offs catching fire (i.e., Todd Walker, Tim Wakefield, and others), the **Reds** couldn't possibly be in contention for the title. If only he had picked up Steve Sparks the first time I put him out in the trash bin in the back alley, he would have saved me from picking him up again and taking two or three more of his hurtful beatings.

➤ The **Blues** have absolutely confounded their owner and their competition by putting up a 483.0 point week to climb past the

## BARRY'S BIG YEAR

Do any of you fellas appreciate what Barry Bonds is about to accomplish this season? I didn't think so. Allow me to edify you. Last year, as you know, Bonds absolutely shattered the all-time record for slugging percentage by notching a percentage of .863, becoming the only player in the history of the game other than Babe Ruth to top the .800 mark for slugging percentage during the year. Ruth had an .847 slugging percentage in 1920, and an .846 slugging percentage in 1921. Until Bonds, nobody else had ever had a slugging average higher than .765 (Lou Gehrig, 1927) other than Ruth. This year, Bonds is again going to best the .800 mark as he is currently posting an .812 SLG.

However, the record that Bonds is absolutely going to shatter this year is for the highest on-base percentage (OBP). The current record for a season is .551 by Ted Williams in 1941, who that year eclipsed John McGraw's previous record of .547 from 1899. Babe Ruth's best on-base percentage was .545 in 1923.

Anyway, Bonds currently has an OBP of .581, and unless he goes hitless and

**Redbirds** and into eighth place. How can a team be so crummy most of the year and so good for one week only. When McBlunder finally figures this out, he will coast to his second HSL championship.

➤ The **Tigers'** 184.5 point total for Week 24 falls well short of the Mendoza Line, but is not the worst performance of the year. His chief competition for the sewer, SloPay's **Pirates**, started the year with a bang by cranking out 179.0 points during Week 1. Big Guy's hump-busting **Bengals** also fell just short of the 200-point mark during Week 15, when they scored a whopping total of 194.0 points. This season cannot get over soon enough for Big Guy.

walkless during his team's last eleven games, he is a lock to set the new record. To put this accomplishment in perspective, the second best OBP in the National League is currently owned by Larry Walker with .424, a crazy .157 percentage points behind Bonds.

Bonds is also going to again shatter the season record for bases on balls. Until last year when Bonds walked 177 times, Babe Ruth held the season record with 170 walks in 1923. Through 151 games played by the Giants this year and with eleven more to go, Bonds already has 182 bases on balls, meaning that he has a legitimate shot at finishing with 200.

And lastly, Bonds currently has a batting average of .373, and is a lock to lead the league since Walker is second with .343. Bonds will be the oldest player to ever lead his league in batting for the first time in his career.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not kissing Barry's rear because I love the guy (the opposite might be true), but with the season that he is having, one simply needs to recognize what he is accomplishing.

## LIGHT UP THAT MESSAGE BOARD

For those of you who don't regularly access our HSL league website, you are missing a heckuva show. Let me just share with you here the messages that have showed up on the board during the heat of the pennant race these past few days:

### Message 172

Date received:

9/15/2002

Time: 9:17 pm

Name TB

#### Comments:

Good Karma gone Awry---Troy "The Next Mike Schmidt" Glaus just ripped his 3rd jack of the night on the radio (and in real life, apparently, as well); that may be the shot that gets Pirnie over the hump as the S-jacks and the Reds race to the finish. Glaus is quite the stud, and Pirnie seems to be having everyone on his roster contribute, despite his transparent efforts to concede victory to Johnny so as to appease the baseball gods. Oddly enough, it is working. 2 weeks to play, but the last week usually can only hurt, not help, so this week is key. Should be fun . . .  
.WHW TB

### Message 173

Date received:

9/16/2002

Time: 6:04 am

Name Itchie

#### Comments:

Magpie...let me know where you signed up to sell your soul to the devil in exchange for a perfect week in the HSL; I am willing to do the same. Three homers from Glaus, saves galore, a perfect turn thru the entire Reds rotation, including shoutouts by Zito, Hudson, and Woody freakin Williams, and a 579 point week. Unbelievable. I am working on my concession speech as you read this, and trying to find a garden hose that will fit in my exhaust

<b>Message 169</b>	Date received: 9/12/2002	Time: 11:54 am
Name Itchie		
<b>Comments:</b> Magpie, I'd like to see some chatter coming out of your pie hole about how the Reds are going to run away with the league title in the next two weeks. You are way too silent for someone whose team has all the stars in alignment. Go ahead and pop off so your team has at least some chance of getting jinxed.		
<b>Message 170</b>	Date received: 9/12/2002	Time: 5:32 pm
Name Mr. Pie		
<b>Comments:</b> I am an overworked/underpaid corporate stiff trying to manage my wounded and weary squad against an independently wealthy/unemployed professional gambler and champagne taster. Oh yeah, I really like my odds in this match. My only hope is that you go on a month long bender in Vegas, call Bone Daddy and ask him to finish out the year for you. Even then I would need Divine intervention (no, Itchie, Divine is not the girl who worked with BJ, Bubbles and Bambi at FDR). Relax, your horse is in the barn.		
<b>Message 171</b>	Date received: 9/13/2002	Time: 8:48 am
Name TB		
<b>Comments:</b> Renegade FTB---not that I have a horse in the race, so to speak, but I am always willing to weigh in anyway. Pirnie is obviously seeking to get good karma by dissing himself, and conceding the match well before the outcome is known. Nice try. I have tried that before, and the karma gods know what is really in your heart. Meanwhile, Johnny is getting about as much mileage out of the A's streak as can be imagined, not that Pirnie hasn't squeezed some juice from the A's, either. Should be a great race down the stretch. . . WHW TB		

pipe.

<b>Message 174</b>	Date received: 9/16/2002	Time: 8:02 am
Name Mr. Pie		
<b>Comments:</b> ITCH-MASTER posting a message at 6:04 AM? Did you get a job? Early tee time? Ameristar ATM broke down? Just finished G-String Divas marathon on HBO? Take another sip(gulp) of your Crown Royal and coffee, and relax. There is plenty of games left to be played. Given your personal relationship with Beelzebub, I am still sure that you will snatch the title from my grasp before this race is done. Not unlike being given a 100 yard lead in a 110 yard race against Mu for the last Bratwurst at Wrigley, you know yer gonna lose unless Mu falls down. I need the One Eyed Jaxs to flop harder than the seismic result of my own misfortunate (albeit graceful)Golden State tumble.		
<b>Message 175</b>	Date received: 9/16/2002	Time: 12:18 am
Name Home stretch		
<b>Comments:</b> It looks to be an exciting race for first between Heckle and Jeckle.		

Why don't the rest of you get in on the fun!

Have a great weekend, back to you next week.

Skipper

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