
From the Bullpen

Official Publication of the

Hot Stove League

Eastern Nebraska Division



2002 Season

Edition No. 27

October 3, 2002

JAX RULE

**ITCHIE PULLS OUT ALL STOPS
TO PASS REDS ON FINAL DAY
OF SEASON**

TRICKO THRICE A BRIDESMAID

TIGERS END SEASON IN OUTHOUSE

**SKIPPER SEEKS SEARCH
WARRANT FOR CUP**

Brethren:

Wow! What a finish. Itchie's Week 26 *pull-out-all-the-stops, no-holds-barred, let's-toss-the-kitchen-sink-at-'em* approach, actually worked to a T and allowed Itchie's **Skipjacks** to rally past the **Reds** on the final day of the season to take the 2002 HSL crown. *Bravo*, and a hearty *well done* to our unemployed and apparently unemployable* Middle Eastern friend. After Tricko's miraculous 572-point Week 24, most of us had written Itchie off for dead. However, our never-say-die colleague drafted every

At the same time, our heartfelt sympathies go out to Tricko, whose hard-luck franchise finished in 2nd place for the *third consecutive year*, and whose team was overtaken on the final weekend of the season for the second consecutive year. Ouch! Another great job of managing, Magpie, but the baseball gods just decided that Itchie needed this one a little bit more than you. After all, the only thing that you have working against *you* is a bad haircut. Itchie, by contrast, has.... Well, never mind. Let's just let him enjoy his crown.

It is amazing, isn't it, how the baseball gods just seem to sense when an HSL manager needs a title to give him a sliver of enjoyment in his life. Through the gathering storm of Itchie's personal world, what with his perpetual lack of employment, his incurable gambling addiction, the male pattern baldness thing, and Zack's refusal to become a Black Muslim, a ray of sunshine has pierced its way through the cloudy gloom and found its way to South 184th Street. Heck, Itchie could have his John Deere tractor repossessed again and Child

available arm that he could off the league scrap heap and adroitly manipulated his lineup during the final week to put together just enough points to overtake the **Reds** and win a fourth crown for the dynastic **Skipjacks**.

* I'm just kidding, already. You're the smartest, shrewdest, savviest guy in the whole league, at least as *you* would tell it, and as soon as the anti-Arab sentiment in this country has died down a bit, you'll have headhunters and Fortune 500 companies beating down your door with offers aplenty.

The **Blues** mounted a ferocious Week 26 charge to try to overtake the **Senators** for 7th place, but fell short. The **Cubs***, likewise, put on a tremendous last week push to try to eclipse the **Wahoos** for the final money spot, and actually took 3rd place for a day or so, only to fall back into 4th when the **Cubs*** ran out of gas the final weekend. Great effort, Shamu*. A fine attempt.

Let's look at the point totals for Week 26:

WEEK 26 POINT TOTALS

1. Blues 392.5

Protective Services revisiting at the door but he would still be smiling like a Cheshire cat, secure in the knowledge that he is the one, and only, four-time HSL winner. Enjoy your time in the sun, Itchie.

Here are the final standings, then, for the 2002 HSL season:

FINAL STANDINGS

1.	Skipjacks	9631.3
2.	Reds	9617.0
3.	Scuzbirds	9154.0
4.	Cubs*	9122.0
5.	Chiefs	9069.0
6.	Bombers	8986.0
7.	Senators	8766.5
8.	Blues	8661.5
9.	Redbirds	8477.5
10.	Tribe	8463.5
11.	Pirates	7942.5
12.	Tigers	7941.0

We are providing for your review, use, amusement and/or bemusement an updated HSL Record of Final Finishes, via web page [link](#) for most of you, hard copy for B.T. As you will be able to see from reviewing same, this year's finish was not the closest of all time in the HSL, but it was the closest in the Bill James era, or in other words, since 1993. Itchie's 14.3 point margin (why a .3, I don't understand?) over the **Reds** is the closest finish during the ten-year reign of our league in its current twelve-team format. The next closest race was the first year of the twelve-team competition, 1993, when the **Reds** narrowly pulled out victory over the **Chiefs** by a margin of 8613 to 8566, a cushion of 47.0 points. So Tricko knows

2.	Skipjacks	379.3
3.	Bombers	338.0
4.	Cubs*	337.0
5.	Tribe	334.0
6.	Redbirds	310.5
7.	Pirates	291.5
8.	Tigers	274.0
9.	Senators	264.5
10.	Scuzbirds	254.5
11.	Reds	252.0
12.	Chiefs	219.0

Only the combination of the **Skipjacks** having a monster last week of 379.5 and the **Reds** having one of the worst weeks at 252.0 allowed the **Jax** to take the top spot in the standings at year end. Even from the standpoint of a 7th-place finisher, who is usually entirely disinterested by the end of the season, it was a fantastic race.

THE GREAT RACE

So how did this year's race stack up with close finishes in the past? I'm so glad you asked. As some of you may know, it just so happens that I keep statistics on this manner of things, and so I am able to provide you with this information from a position of knowledge.

both victory and defeat in close pennant races.

The *third* closest race was last year, 2001, when the **Senators** traipsed past the **Reds** during the final weekend on the back of Phil Nevin and won by a slim margin of 51 points, 9260.5-9209.5. The **Senators'** margin of victory over the 3rd place team that year, the **Wahoos**, was only 63.5 points, as the **Wahoos** finished with 9197.0. The *fourth* closest race was in 1999 when the **Skips** beat out the **Chiefs** by 9484-9417, a victory margin of 67.0 points.

But the closest race of all time was in 1991, when the **Reds** won their first title by squeaking past the **Tigers** by a sum total of 6 points, winning 14,215 to 14,209. Now *that* was a close pennant race. Big Guy could probably give you the blow-by-blow story on the end of the 1991 season, and we'll ask him to do that on another day. Just two years earlier, in 1989, the **Tigers** had their own photo finish victory by beating the **Red Sox** to the tune of 13,435 to 13,427 points, a margin of only 8 points.

And so, it may be seen, there have been some incredibly close races in the wonderful history of our league. This year's finish certainly matches up well with some of these exciting races in the past, and will no doubt be long remembered and oft-discussed.

NEXT ISSUE

I've got lots more to share with my good friends, but for now I will end this issue so I can get it up on the wire yet today, and I'll

save some of the other goodies for next week or whenever the next issue gets out, to include:

1. How Itchie Won;
2. Around the Horn;
3. Individual Leaders;
4. 2002 Draft Day, a retrospective analysis;
5. More great stuff.

So much to say, so little time to say it. Enjoy this issue, see you next time around the block.

Skipper

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