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# From the Bullpen

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# Hot Stove League

Eastern Nebraska Division



2002 Season

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## **HIS WAY: ITCHIE'S FORMULA FOR SUCCESS**

Brethren:

As promised, below is a recap of how Itchie captured the Cup\* in 2002:

**Round 1 – Mike Mussina, starting pitcher:** Itchie's first pick was certainly nothing to write home about. Moose ended the season with a total of 436 points (13.2 PPG), the twentieth best total among starting pitchers.

**Round 2 – Ivan Rodriguez, C:** It didn't get any better in the second for Itchie, as he drafted I-Rod who promptly went out and hurt himself and missed much of the first half of the season. I-Rod heated up to end up averaging 4.0 points per game, but because of injuries, played in only a little over 100 games and totaled 430 points, sixth best among catchers.

**Round 3 – Kevin Brown, SP:** Itchie dug his hole even deeper in the third round

**Round 4 – Miguel Tejada, SS:** Itchie seriously righted his boat with his fourth round pick of Miguel Tejada, the offense-minded Athletics shortstop who went out and proved that his 2001 season was no fluke. Tejada was third in the majors in runs batted in with 131, trailing only A-Rod and Magglio, and finished with a total of 706.0 points (not including bonus points, which brought him up to 726 points), good for fifth among hitters and sixth overall in the league, behind only A-Rod, Bonds, Randy Johnson, Soriano and Vlad. I do believe that Miguel has turned himself into a first-rounder.

**Round 5 – Ichiro Suzuki, RF:** Itchie couldn't resist taking his namesake in Round 5, and Suzuki was a decent fifth round pick, particularly because of the way that he gets points. However, a major slump in the second half of the season took some of the luster off of this pick, and Suzuki finished with a per-game average of 3.3 PPG and a total output of 525 points, good for seventh among right fielders.

**Round 6 – Jeff Kent, 2B:** Itchie's

by picking Kevin Brown, who ended up being hurt almost the entire year, going 3-4 and finished with only about 112 points. With his one-two-three punch of Moose-IRod-Brown, Itchie clearly had one of the worst first three rounds of all time in the HSL, yet was able to recover sufficiently during the rest of the draft to make history. As the mighty Casey used to say, "You kin look it up!"

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\* The mythical Cup, that is. No one has seen it in two years.

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**Round 7 – Eric Chavez, 3B:** The savvy masthead of the **Skipjacks** picked up the second member of his A's connection in the seventh round by snapping up Eric Chavez. Sensing a breakout year from this young Hispanic third-sacker, Itchie coolly ignored the seventh round run on relief pitchers (five taken that round) and picked the promising Chavez, who rewarded him with a 3.5 PPG average and a total of 543 points, second best among third basemen.

**Round 8 – Juan Pierre, CF:** After two buzzsaw picks in a row, Itchie hit a speed bump with his selection of Juan Pierre (364 points). While we all can recognize the potential benefits of picking a young, up-and-coming Rockie; not unlike Itchie's new hair follicle\* stimulant, Juan Pierre provided no identifiable benefit to Itchie.

**Round 9 – Frank Thomas, DH:** For a while it looked like Itchie might have outsmarted everyone by picking up the Big

criminal genius mind began showing up in Round 6, as he put himself into the mind of the prevaricating Jeff Kent and assured himself that Kent's preseason injury was not all that bad and would not be a deterrent to a fine season. After missing but a handful of games at the start of the season, Kent got healthy for good and played like a Maynard for the rest of the season, finishing with 723 points, tied for best (with Alfie Soriano) among second basemen, and a glossy 4.8 PPG average, third best in the league behind only Bonds (5.7 PPG) and A-Rod (5.4 PPG). Gutsy and brilliant selection.

**Round 11 – Jose Cruz, Jr., CF:** Junior was a bust again, ending up with only 352 points for the season, and ditched by Itchie in early September.

**Round 12 – Shane Reynolds, SP:** This pick likewise brought a few titters from the peanut gallery on Draft Day as Itchie's co-managers realized that the **Skipjacks'** third best starting pitcher was Shane Reynolds. Shane finished with 78 points, and is probably nearing the end of his HSL career.

**Round 13 – Tino Martinez, 1B:** While Tino was no threat to rewrite any record books this year, as a St. Louis Cardinal he was a solid and steady, if not spectacular, performer. About right for a thirteenth round pick. Total points: 381.

**Round 14 – Ellis Burks, LF:** Although a bit long in the tooth at age 60, Burks was a mainstay performer in the **Skipjacks'** lineup during the 2002 season, and his 455 total

Hurt in the ninth round, as Frank seemed poised for a large year. But he wasn't, and Itchie didn't. Frank continues to be a slug who continues to disappoint, finishing this year with a mediocre 476 points for the season, a per-game clip of 3.2.

**Round 10 – David Wells, SP:** Ever in recognition of the need for strong starting pitching in this league, Itchie got right on the task at hand by drafting David “Unmade Bed” Wells in the tenth round. As I recall, a chuckle or two surfaced following this pick as we all realized that Wells was going to be the No. 2 starter in the **Skipjacks** rotation, and we were all certain that the **Jax** were on the road to ruin. Once again, Itchie and David surprised the rest of us, with Wells putting together a solid year and serving as the spiritual nucleus of a rag-tag but ultimately unbelievably overachieving and effective pitching staff. Once again, your keen baseball intellect and bold drafting strategy prevailed, Brother Itchie. In your mind, at least.

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\* There is no truth to the rumor that Itchie is growing his head of hair, or what's left of it, into a Mullet to enhance his employability

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**Round 17 – Antonio Alfonseca, CL:** Not a particularly laudable pick. Ended up with 266 points.

**Round 18 – Eddie Guardado, CL:** Itchie just had a feeling that everyday Eddie was going to be the AL's top save man this season, and that Eddie would probably still be available in the eighteenth round for him to pick up. Luck, you are a lady. E.G. logged a total of 502 points at a 7.4 PPG

points and 3.5 PPG clip are probably better than average for someone going this low in the draft. A very fine draft decision.

**Round 15 – Roy Halladay, SP:** Along about here is where the baseball gods decided to smile upon our wretched, balding, unemployed gambling addict and decided that Itchie should be compensated for his sorry lot in life by winning the 2002 HSL championship. There can be no other explanation for his fortuitous drafting of Mr. Halladay (who ended up with a total of 538 points, ninth best among all pitchers, at a 15.5 PPG clip) and the picks that shortly follow. Welcome to the upper echelon, Roy.

**Round 16 – Octavio Dotel, MR:** The Octagon Man is a positively lights-out relief pitcher and would be the closer for almost every other team except one who has Billy Wagner. It's just almost unfair that Itchie got to use him as a Middle Reliever all year, where he led all middle relievers in points scored by a long shot with 531.0 points, *eleventh best among all pitchers*, outscoring all but three of the league's closers. Terrific selection.

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**Round 22, Derek Lowe, SP:** Most of us don't expect to be able to select one of the leading candidates for the AL Cy Young Award in the twenty-second round, but Itchie claims to just having a “good feeling” that Derek was going to have a 600-point year. Coming off a year in which he was almost tarred and feathered and run out of Beantown on a rail, Lowe had a fabulous first season as a full-time starter and finished with 575 points, not including bonus points



pace, and cracked the top twenty in gross points for all pitchers, even outscoring second-rounder Greg Maddux.

**Round 19 – Brian Jordan, LF:** Mediocre pick. Didn't fit Itchie's management style.

**Round 20 – Odalis Perez, SP:** Another clear example of great scouting by Itchie's crackerjack scout team. Itchie watched Odalis' star rise to its very apex before trading him off to McBlunder for Bagwell at just the right moment, providing the **Jax** with a much-needed infusion of offensive firepower for the second half of the season. Thanks to the Perez trade, Bags was able to contribute 312 points to the **Skipjacks'** cause, performing at a 4.1 PPG rate. As we all know, Odalis took a steep nosedive as soon as he hit the **Blues'** roster, causing a further slumping of McBlunder's shoulders, before reversing his downward trajectory and finishing up the season on a fairly high note.

**Round 21, Jose Valentin, SS:** Wedged between Odalis Perez and Derek Lowe, Valentin had some pretty steep competition for favor with the **Skipjacks** manager and, truth be told, failed miserably. Filler material.

**Round 26 – Brent Abernathy, 2B:** Nonfactorial.

(including his no-no), seventh best among starting pitchers, and a heartwarming 19.7 PPG average. Derek was Itchie's Cy Young and MVP rolled into one. And to think that Itchie was all set to draft Mitch Meluskey in the twenty-second round until Possum stepped up to the board and left Itchie speechless when he snapped up Itchie's intended pick in that round right out from under him. In a chain reaction of epic proportion, Itchie then uttered out the name *Derek Lowe*, taking Derek's name right out of U-Bob's mouth, and leaving U-Bob to draft James Baldwin in his place.\*

**Round 23 – David Justice, LF:** Don't ask me how or why, but somehow David Justice ended up in the **Skipjacks'** starting lineup at season end, and managed to contribute a sparkling 75.5 positive points for the cause, at the majestic clip of 1.7 PPG. What a gamer.

**Round 24 – Carlos Guillen, SS:** Probably never cracked the starting lineup.

**Round 25 – Einer Diaz, C:** May have played a critical role while Ivan Rodriguez was on the DL, but so what. Second string catchers are worth about as much as, well, creditcard hucksters.

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\* Just think, U-Bob. If you had drafted Derek Lowe instead of James Baldwin in the 22nd round, a points swing of about a thousand points (wasn't Baldwin about minus 400 for the year?), you would have finished in third place this year. Better luck next draft.

**TRADES**

**Round 27 – Josh Towers, SP:** No comment necessary.

**Round 28 – Brian Tollberg, SP:** Irrelevant.

## FREE AGENT DRAFT

Itchie was an active participant in the free agent draft, picking up all of the following players in the free agent draft at one point or another during the course of the season:

Vincente Padilla  
Paul Wilson  
A.J. Pierzynski  
Scott Hatteberg  
Adam Kennedy  
Shawn Sedlacek  
Brian Moehler  
Bob Higginson  
Matt Williams  
Bobby J. Jones  
Melvin Mora  
Andy Benes  
Brian Meadows  
Justin Miller  
Glendon Rusch  
David Roberts  
John Thomson  
Ryan Dempster  
Sidney Ponson  
Dan Wright  
Ryan Franklin

Itchie's most significant acquisitions in the FAD were Vincente Padilla, whom Itchie drafted back on April 8, and who contributed 386.0 points to the cause at a 12.9 PPG; Andy Benes, drafted on , who kicked in 83.5 points at a 13.9 PPG pace; Ryan Dempster,

Itchie's only trade this season was of Odalis Perez and Tino Martinez to McBlunder for Jeff Bagwell and Jermaine Dye. Bags contributed 312.5 points to the **Jax** total and Jermaine Dye 251.5 points (3.6 PPG), for a total contribution of 564.0 points. On the other side of the trade ledger, Odalis contributed 211.0 points to the **Blues** and Tino a total of 139.0 points, for a total contribution of 350.0 points. So in other words, McBlunder got fleeced, but not skinned alive.

And there you have it, boys. The 2002 **Skipjacks**, from cradle to grave.

## BLACK SUNDAY

This may be painful for Tricko to relive, and my intent is not to cause Tricko even more pain than he is already in, but rather to preserve for history the magnificent final day of the season by the gutsy, never-say-die **Skipjacks**. You may want to skip past this section, Tricko.

As all of you are now aware, Itchie headed into the final day of the season in need of a minor miracle. With the **Reds** still sporting a lead of 18 points, Itchie needed solid performances from all of his pitchers and hitters and subpar performances from the **Reds** team members. What happened was just this:

## HITTERS

Of his eight hitters in the starting lineup for the last weekend of the season, two of the best, Jeff Kent and Ellis Burks, were DNPs. However, from his marvelous A's contingency, Itchie got 7 points from Tejada,

who totaled 32.0 points for the **Jax** in two final-week outings; Dan Wright, who pitched a gem and scored 25.0 points during the final weekend of the season; and Sidney Ponson -- yes, I said, *Sidney Ponson* -- who made the most of his one start with the **Jax** and scored 12.5 *positive* points during the waning days of the season.

11 from Chavez, and 9.5 from Dye. Go figure. The A's already have a playoff berth in the bag, and you figure Art Howe might give his starters a day of rest before the playoffs, but instead he plays all of his studs and they score 27.5 points for the **Skipjacks**. On top of this, I-Rod chimes in with 9 points in a meaningless game for him and for the Rangers, and Roberts puts up a goose egg. Only Bagwell, with minus 1.5 points, went negative for Itchie. In summary, the six every-day players who played for Itchie on Sunday scored a total of 35.0 points.

Over in the **Reds** camp, Magpie had twelve hitters up in his major leagues for the final day of the season. Of these twelve, A-Rod scored 5.5 points, Glaus 10.5, Nixon 11, and Todd Walker 1.5 points for a gross total of 28.5 hitting points for the **Reds**. However, of the other eight players, seven had negative points for the final day of the season and one had no points, resulting in net scoring from the twelve **Reds** hitters of 18.5 points.

### PITCHERS

For final day pitching, Magpie had Zito in the starting lineup, who contributed a nifty 23 points to the cause with a strong final day outing. UU notched a save on the final day of the season and contributed 12 points to the cause, while the Mad Russian, Vladimir Nunez, pitched in 3.5 relief points. However, the freshly promoted Denny Stark\* couldn't replicate his earlier performance for the **Reds** farm system (20+ points on Tuesday,

It was clearly meant to be. The baseball gods have spoken.

## 2002 SKIPJACKS YEAR-END ROSTER

### HITTERS

› Migel Tejada	726.0/4.5
› Jeff Kent	722.5/4.8
› Eric Chavez	530.5/3.5
⊖ Ichiro Suzuki	516.5/3.4
Ellis Burks	455.0/3.5
I-Rod	430.0/4.0
› Jeff Bagwell	312.5/4.1
⊖ Jermaine Dye	251.5/3.6
⊖ Brian Jordan	234.5/2.6
⊖ David Justice	75.5/1.7
⊖ David Roberts	15.0/3.0
Others	1440.0/2.7
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>5709.5/3.4</b>

### PITCHERS

› Derek Lowe	610.0/19.7
⊖ Eddie Guardado	502.0/7.4
› Roy Halladay	496.5/15.5

September 24 while in the **Reds'** minors) and walked the **Reds** backwards by 7.5 points. The **Reds** pitchers netted a total of 31 points on the final day of the season, for a total **Reds** output of 49.5 points.

Staked with an 18-point lead going into the final day of the season, you would figure that scoring 49.5 points on the final Sunday would be enough to get the job done, what with the usual September callups and rest days and so forth. But you would be wrong. In this magical year of the **Skipjacks**, Itchie's charges were up to the task, no matter how seemingly insurmountable it might be.

On the final day of the season, Roy Halladay threw perhaps his finest game of the season, giving up only two hits over eight innings, and scoring 34.5 points for the **Jax**. Mike Mussina, a mediocre pitcher all year, gassed it up a notch and added 19 points to the cause. Andy Benes, equally capable of giving up a baker's dozen points to the bad, scored 13 points for the **Jax** on the final day of the season. Toss in the Octagon Man's positive 1 point, and the **Jax** pitchers scored a total of 67.5 points on the final day of the year, and when added with their hitting points, netted **102.5 points on the final day of the season**. Incredible. Simply freaking incredible.

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\* No relation to Charles Starkweather.

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› Mike Mussina	436.0/13.2
› David Wells	416.5/13.9
› Octavio Dotel	408.5/6.5
› Vincente Padilla	386.0/12.9
› Andy Benes	83.5/13.9
› Paul Wilson	46.5/3.6
› Justin Miller	35.0/8.8
› Ryan Dempster	32.0/16.0
› Dan Wright	25.0/25.0
› Sidney Ponson	12.5/12.5
› John Thompson	0
› Glendon Rusch	-0.5/-0.2
› Brian Meadows	-1.5/-0.5
› Ryan Franklin	-5.5/-5/5
Others	504.0/7.0

## NEXT ISSUE

Lots more good stuff. See you then.

Skipper

