

The Whale's Tale



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Greetings once again, my esteemed baseball brethren! We are one month into the baseball season and there are some alarming trends already starting to take shape. The Tigers & Wahoos are averaging over 400 points per week and one-half of our league are 300 points out of first place. I have always said you cannot win a pennant in April.....but you sure can lose one.

Since we are one full month into the season, I thought I would spew my two cents worth for every team:

Tigers – You have a great pitching staff, in fact you have the staff I should have drafted in the four hole. I would put Johnson, Brown, Garcia & Redman up against any staff in the HSL. Big Guy, this may be your year, although I don't see your team keeping up this torrid pace.

Wahoos – Ted, it must be exciting to read the box scores. You are averaging over two homeruns a night and you are on pace for about 360 big bombs. It's a good thing Bill James did away with that cap thing last year or your team might have some cap woes.

Skipjacks – Why do you insist on always juggling your pitchers in a shameless attempt to buy a pennant by getting extra starts out of your staff. If you hadn't shot yourself in the foot with Hermansen, D'Amico, Abbott and Affeldt, you would be in first place now. Dude, for whatever reason, lady luck has chosen you. Try not to screw it up by over-managing your team. Just sit back and watch your players' respective career years unfold before your eyes.

Irates – Denny, I love cheering for you and your teams. With too many lawyers and salesmen (one is too many) in our league, it is refreshing to observe your laid back demeanor on draft day and watch you do your work like a silent assassin. This may be your

most solid team in a number of years, although you need a quick recovery from Richie Sexson to stay close to a money spot.

Red Birds – Not a bad team, led by Bonds putting up little league numbers: .463, 10 HR's, 22 RBI's, 23 Runs and 44 Walks in 25 games. Actually, even a premier little leaguer would be proud to sport these numbers. The only knock on your team is that you have mowed my grass twice in the free agent drafts, Travis Hafner and Scott Spiezio. You cannot possibly win this thing managing like me, unless of course, you pray for a strike.

Blues - Blongo, your team seems to be in an every other week feast or famine mode: 401,260, 490 & 212. When Nick Johnson, Angel Berroa, Larry Walker and Mark Prior get healthy and start contributing, your team could put up some huge numbers, although your pitching staff may be a little thin.

Chiefs – Screech, another very solid team. You did a fine job on draft day and on working the free agent drafts. If Schmidt, Morris & Millwood can stay healthy and put up their top notch numbers, you can make a good run at this thing.

Cubs – The Cubs need some significant means reversion pitching stuff to occur in the near future, or you can put the proverbial fork in my team. The Cubs are dropping faster than Level 3 stock.

Senators – You should be ashamed of yourself, first for drafting a “never ever”, Glavine, and second, for actually using him. Do the words “never ever” mean anything at all? It also appears you have now gone through every available third baseman in the league. I hate to admit this but I see a ton of upside with your team.

Reds – Mitch, this just doesn't seem to be one of your typically solid teams. While you have certainly had your share of injuries/underachievers: Garciparra, Torii Hunter, Piazza and A-Rod, I just don't think much of your pitching staff, which probably means that you will have the best staff in the league.

Bombers – Mouse, you have a very solid squad. I see a ton of offensive firepower on your team. Vinny Castilla in the 17th round may turn out to be the best pick in the draft. If you can obtain some consistent pitching, you could be in a position to make a pretty good move.

Tribe – Bob, In our 20 years of play, I have never seen a month where so many quality players have underachieved to this extent. The good news is that you have only one direction to go. I am a huge Aubrey Huff fan and want him to have a monster year, if only to tell Dave, “I told you so.”

Random thoughts

If you don't like to read whining, please skip the next 5 paragraphs.

- As a first time Mussina owner, I didn't expect any 15 strikeout games or no-hitters. I just sort of expected the 13 year veteran to pretty much keep doing what he has been doing for the past 13 years. What I didn't expect was for my current 3rd round pick to finish an entire month with negative points.
- Why do I have four closers and three middle relievers on my roster and have a total of 8 saves and 2 holds for the entire month?

- Is Mike Sweeney a weenie? Not since Chris Brown a/k/a the "tin man" have I seen a player take so much time off for an assortment of injuries. For a big strapping young man, he seems to spend a lot of time on the shelf.
- Johnny has already managed to secure more points out of Troy Glaus in one month than I mustered all of last year for my 3rd round pick.
- Last week I had 4 starting pitchers going on one day, each with a relatively favorable match-up. With an additional save and/or hold, I should be looking at 70 to 80 pitching points which would put my team right back in the hunt. Pedro, Livan Hernandez, Al Leiter, Joe Kennedy and my relievers combined for 9 (NINE) points, the same as some obscure middle reliever pitching to one batter in the 7th inning and walking away with a "hold."

On a slightly more serious note:

- If you haven't seen "The Passion of the Christ", you just must see this movie. I am certainly no movie critic nor am I a theologian, however in my humble opinion, Mel Gibson has captured the essence of the magnitude of the love God has for us.
- How big of a hero is Pat Tillman? What an incredible story! I want to put a poster of this kid in my room, because when I grow up, I would be honored to be just like him....Below are some excerpts from an ESPN article:
- Pat Tillman never wanted to be a big story nor an American hero. He just wanted to do his duty, as proudly and anonymously as the soldiers who stood by his side. There were no news conferences, no interviews, no parades, no self-congratulations. A year ago, Tillman left his new wife, his \$3.6 million NFL contract and disappeared into the desert night.
- He never explained why he left the glamour, the money and the good life for \$18,000 to fight with the Army Rangers in Eastern Afghanistan, chasing al-Qaida and Taliban, and the risk of that firefight that cost him his life. His ultimate sacrifice wasn't walking away from football and a fortune because clearly his principles and priorities transcended the values of our culture.
- In a climate where everyone talks so much about so little, Pat Tillman believed that sometimes a man needed to make a stand in his life. He has transcended even the highest standards of selflessness and sacrifice, and his life and death will take on what they deserve: mythical proportions.

The Standings after 4 week

UPPER DIVISION

1.	Tigers	1632
2.	Wahoos	1615
3.	Skipjacks	1512
4.	Irates	1493
5.	Red Birds	1452
6.	Blues	1364

LOWER DIVISION

7.	Chiefs	1346
8.	Cubs	1330
9.	Senators	1329
10.	Reds	1235

11.	Bombers	1221
12.	Tribe	1008

Week 4 Point Totals

1.	Wahoos	396
2.	Tigers	396
3.	Chiefs	396
4.	Irates	387
5.	Skipjacks	376
6.	Bombers	372
7.	Red Birds	371
8.	Tribe	324
9.	Senators	311
10.	Reds	251
11.	Cubs	220
12.	Blues	212

TOP HITTERS BY POSITION

Catchers

1.	Posada	126
2.	Johnson	106
3.	Lopez	105
4.	i-Rod	105
5.	Varitek	104

First Base

1.	Bagwell	120
2.	Helton	120
3.	Casey	119
4.	C. Wilson	111
5.	Pujols	109

Second Base

1.	Loretta	119
2.	Belliard	105
3.	Giles	103
4.	Soriano	103
5.	Spivey	101

Shortstop

1.	M. Young	141
2.	C. Guillen	93
3.	J. Uribe	92
4.	J. Wilson	92
5.	Tejada	86

Third Base

1.	Castilla	128
2.	Rolen	127
3.	Beltre	123
4.	Lowell	115

5. Blalock 113

Left Field

1. Bonds 172
2. Dunn 137
3. Alou 116
4. L. Gonzo 112
5. M. Ramirez 108

Center Field

1. Beltran 145
2. Podsednik 111
3. Grisson 104
4. Biggio 101
5. Edmonds 100

Right Field

1. M. Cabrera 115
2. D. Bautista 113
3. Hidalgo 111
4. Dye 110
5. V. Guerrero 110

**Top Pitchers
(including MR*)**

1. Glavine 111
2. Clemens 110
3. Clement 106
4. Brown 105
5. Johnson 102
6. Wood 102
7. Vazquez 97
8. Sheets 93
9. Oswalt 89
10. Hudson 88

Relievers

1. Benitez 122
2. Rivera 114
3. Mesa 102
4. *F. Rodriguez 101
5. Wagner 98
6. *A. Otsuka 98
7. Foulke 93
8. F. Cordero 91
9. Gagne 89
10. *Herges 87

As you can see, there are several names that do not belong and several others that one would expect to be in the top 5 of their respective positions. I'll let each of you be the judge.

I wish the best of luck to each and every team owner for the remainder of the season. Have a great summer and I will see you in San Diego!

Shamu

SKIPPER SEZ

Our leading point-getters this week were the Wahoos, the Tigers and the Chiefs with 396 points apiece. What are the odds of that happening? At the other end of the spectrum, Stretch's Blues crashed hard after their euphoric Week 3 total of 490 points, and were only able to muster up 212 points for Week 4.

The No. 1 starting pitcher through four weeks is Tom Glavine, the 23rd round pick of the Senators. You know, I was going to try to hold out until the 25th round, but something just told me that it was time to pick him.

Who is the biggest hitting surprise through four weeks of the season? My money is on Vinny Castilla, who has the fifth-highest total with 120 points (5.6 PPG). Mouse picked up Vinny in Round 17, just after Tirebiter snapped up Reggie Sanders, who is having a surprisingly-good year in his own right.

The biggest surprise at closer is either Benitez, who leads all pitchers with 122 points (11th round, Reds) or the ubiquitous Jose Mesa, who was not even drafted during our initial draft.

To show you how good of a start the Tigers and Wahoos are having, and how dismal things look for the Tribe, through four weeks of last year the leading team was the Reds with 1351.5 points, and the other end of the spectrum had the sorry Redbirds with a total of 1089.0 points through four weeks. But that was then, and this is now.

FIRST TUESDAY HSL LUNCH

Our first First Tuesday HSL lunch was a ripping good time, with five members of the Omaha contingency gathering in the Wine Room at Travato's for good food and good conversation. The subject matter of discussion was varied -- although primarily baseball-related -- and included the following subjects:

- * Itchie's realistic fear that he has already seen the best that the Skipjacks have to offer in 2004, and he is only in fourth place.

- * Big Guy's comparison of the Tigers-Wahoos '04 race to the tête-à-tête between Affirmed and Alidar, leaving them only sixteen points apart through four weeks of the season.

- * Mouse's ruthless method of porch-beating his disobedient canine into submission.

- * Max Bridge's humiliating base-running gaffes.
- * The epic matchup between Jaime Moyer and Scott Hatteberg as described in Moneyball, "Just tell me where you want it!"
- * Itchie's most recent tongue-lashing from the distaff member of the Thielen household.
- * Big Guy's Tale of Two Dachshunds.
- * Itchie's supreme state of inebriation in Pittsburgh.
- * Itchie's magical 130-plus score at Firethorn while paired with Dr. Hurlbut, during which time the Red Sox's dramatic collapse from contention was enthusiastically discussed.
- * Julio Franco's magnificent baseball career, which continues at age 45 after once giving up baseball for a fortnight to play in a jazz band.

There's nothing like talking baseball with one's pals, is there? Be sure to mark your calendar now for our next First Tuesday HSL lunch, which will be on Tuesday, June 1, location to be announced by our Social Chairman, Brother Mouse.

Keep on keepin' on.

Skipper