

From the Bullpen

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NEBRASKA
Hot Stove League



2006 Season

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JAX RECLAIM LEAD; CUBS* CLOSE BEHIND IN 2nd

Itchie used a two-win Maddux week as a springboard to a whopping team total of 542 points and the reclamation of his lead in the standings after three weeks. Already my theme for John this season is: *Only Itchie*. Clearly, there is no earthly explanation for how he does what he does.

Although Itchie's team performance was amazing enough, it was topped by the **Wahoos'** jaw-dropping total of 542.75 points during Week 3, and Brother Shamu* also topped the 500-point total this week with 502.5 points.

Is it just me, or is there something amiss with our new points system? Have we ever before had a week when three different teams scored more than 500 points? And more to the point, why isn't *my* team scoring at this record clip? I don't want to be hasty, but I can see a couple of asterisks in our league future.

In any event, here are the standings after three weeks:

WEEK 3 STANDINGS

1.	Skipjacks	1304.25
2.	Cubs*	1291.00
3.	Wahoos	1276.00
4.	Reds	1271.00
5.	Redbirds	1268.25
6.	Tigers	1199.75
7.	Chiefs	1197.00
8.	Bears	1160.25
9.	Senators	1139.75
10.	Blues	1125.75
11.	Tribe	1099.50
12.	Bombers	1087.75

WEEK 3 POINT TOTALS

1.	Wahoos	542.75
2.	Skipjacks	542.00

3.	Cubs*	502.50
4.	Bombers	429.25
5.	Bears	393.25
6.	Chiefs	390.25
7.	Senators	384.00
8.	Redbirds	372.25
9.	Tigers	363.75
10.	Blues	346.00
11.	Tribe	326.00
12.	Reds	297.25

**INDIVIDUAL LEADERS
HITTERS**

1.	Albert Pujols	Skipjacks	134.50
2.	Mo Ensberg	Tigers	122.75
3.	Chris Shelton	Redbirds	122.25
4.	Jim Thome	Bombers	119.50
5.	Travis Hafner	Skipjacks	110.00
6.	Johnny Gomes	Blues	106.00
7.	Miguel Tejada	Cubs*	105.75
8.	Carlos Delgado	Senators	100.75
9.	Vernon Wells	Tigers	100.00
10.	Derek Jeter	Redbirds	98.25
(T)	Lance Berkman	Wahoos	98.25

PITCHERS

1.	Roy Oswalt	Chiefs	107.50
2.	Curt Schilling	Tigers	103.00
(T)	Greg Maddux	Skipjacks	103.00
4.	John Papelbon	Reds	96.50
5.	Jose Contreras	Redbirds	92.50
6.	Pedro Martinez	Cubs*	90.50
7.	Mark Buehrle	Blues	88.00
8.	Josh Beckett	Reds	83.00
(T)	Chris Carpenter	Bombers	83.00
(T)	Scott Shields	Senators	83.00

WHO'S HOT

Based on points scored during the third week of play, here are the hot hitters and pitchers in the league:

HITTERS

1.	Craig Biggio	Blues	62.75
2.	B. Phillips	Tribe	61.25
3.	Mo Ensberg	Tigers	57.00
4.	Miguel Tejada	Cubs*	49.50
(T)	Josh Barfield	Bears(?)	49.50

PITCHERS

1.	Greg Maddux	Skipjacks	57.50
2.	Jose Contreras	Redbirds	53.50
3.	Pedro Martinez	Cubs*	50.50
4.	T. Buchholz	Tribe	48.00
5.	David Bush	Skipjacks	46.50

FROM LEFT FIELD



Maybe I'm wrong on this, but I could have sworn that it was the **Tribe** that drafted rookie phenom Josh Barfield, and not the **Bears**, on whose roster Barfield is currently shining. My early pick for managerial blunder of the year.



In the wouda, couda, shouda department, I swear to Allah that I was going to take Mike Mussina, Greg Maddux, Vernon Wells, Travis Hafner and Chris Shelton in the Draft, but for some reason I just couldn't get the words formed in my mouth quick enough on Draft Day. It's always the guys that I was gonna take that end up doing great. What up with this?



I saw in *The Daily Record* the other day that our county attorney has filed a paternity action against someone named **Hans Bontrager**. Since nobody in the league knows where SloPay lives, works or plays -- or anything else about him, for that matter -- I am personally convinced that Hans and Denny are probably one in the same. If the child at issue is named Chase, Miguel or Grady, we'll have our answer.



While U-Bob is probably not that happy about the start registered by his First Round Draft pick, Felix Hernandez, it can't be much worse than how I feel about my First Round Draft pick, Johan Santana, who is currently 0-3 and has a total of 30 points. Any chance for a redo on the Draft?



Is there anybody out there who can 'splain to me how to draft free agents? We continue to be in the dark on this issue up here on Capitol Hill.

THE CLUBHOUSE CURMUDGEON

Please grant me a thousand pardons as I age not so gracefully and grow increasingly bitter about **change**. I guess it goes with the territory. Just the other day, last Thursday, I turned on my office computer because I wanted to make a couple of roster changes on my team, and I'll be damned if this stupid Yahoo! program that we have didn't deny me my desired transactions once again, for about the 15th time. I know for a fact that I have drafted Brad Hawpe 7

times, but do you see him on my roster? Nooooo! I have no clue how to draft a waiver wire guy, and can only get a small percentage of my promotions and demotions to “take.” Given my proclivity for making too many roster changes and shooting myself in the feet through over-management, maybe this is a good thing, but it still irks me to no end that we have to learn this new system.

Speaking of change that I am resisting, we have this stupid new software program that was recently installed on our office computers. After finally mastering (to my way of thinking) our old program, our IT man pulled the rug out from under me and forced us to go to a new system. Now I’ve got crap popping up all over my screen all the time, can’t even find my own secretaries in my e-mail address book, and can’t even figure out how my damned calendar works so I know where I’m going on an hourly basis. Can’t do jack shit these days. I’m ready to throw in the towel.

My sad tale of last Thursday continued as I pulled out of the parking lot of our building that same day, when, for some unexplained reason, my car alarm started going off, and I couldn’t figure out how to shut it off. It’s blaring like an air raid siren and I’m driving around the parking lot trying to distance myself from the building, as curious onlookers craned their heads out of the windows on all five floors to see what was causing the disturbance. It finally stopped honking on its own about three blocks down Regency Parkway, for reasons unknown to me.

Then on my supposedly peaceful drive home from the office, I tried to use my cell phone and found that my kids have been playing games on my phone and have mucked it up to kingdom come. I hit the speed dial button to try to call home, only to find out that Will has put one of his little buddies on my speed dial on the same number that used to be my home speed dial. On top of that, somebody changed the wallpaper on my phone (whatever that is), and I’m convinced that somebody’s been messing with the vibrate and ringer functions, because my cell phone always seems to vibrate when I want it to ring and to ring when I want it to vibrate.

So then I got home and wanted to access some of my files that *used* to be on my laptop until Cheryl deleted all of them, so I can’t do that. A few of you may have heard me grouching about that on Draft Day. In fact, my lovely bride’s only assignment while I was out of town with all of our kids on Spring Break was to take my laptop in to Best Buy to get help in retrieving all of my valuable data accumulated over the last eight years, but do you suppose that this got done? Right. Of course, I had to take the bull by the horns and haul the damned thing in myself and plead for help in recovering the lost Ernst files which essentially encompass the totality of my existence. More later on whether this is successful.

To close out my aggravating day at the mercy of the tech gods, after the kids were finally put down for the night, I sat down at my new home computer which my office IT guy promised me would be faster than a speeding bullet, only to have it lock up on me and deny me access to my beloved box scores. Can you say *Profanity Stream*? It’s a darned good thing that there wasn’t a sledge hammer or a can of gas within arm’s reach, or it would have been bye-bye to my new computer.

Is it just me, or is this wonderful hi-tech world of ours passing we middle-aged males by? Quick, somebody hand me an abacus, a rotary dial phone, and a black and white TV with rabbit ears for antenna. I want to go back to the good old days of Leave It To Beaver. Whoever coined the phrase, “Change is good,” needs to come walk a mile or two in my shoes.

Oh, and have a nice day!

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Next week: The Tiger’s Tale.

Soon: Skipper's Abridged History of the Hidden Ball Trick

Skipper