

From the Bullpen

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Hot Stove League



2006 Season

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Men:

I'm happy to report that things are looking good in terms of the availability of HSL members for our Draft Day on Saturday, March 25, as well as commitments to attend a Trip to St. Louis during the June 16-18 weekend. Here's what we have so far from the group:

Manager	Draft Day	The Trip
Itchie	No response	No response
Tirebiter	In	In
Skipper	In	In
B.T.	N/R	N/R
Screech	In	In
Mouse	In	In
Magpie	In	In
Big Guy	In	In
Possum	In ¹	EAU ²
SloPay	N/R	N/R
U-Belly	In	In
Shamu	In	In
McBlunder	In	In

It isn't even February yet, and we already have 9 solid commitments for the Trip, with seven months to get the rest of our crew (Itchie, Possum, SloPay and B.T.) on board. Could this be the year when we have all thirteen league members in attendance? If so, somebody make sure that the arch is still structurally sound, as St. Louis will never be the same.

¹ Is available on the 25th, but as usual, wants to screw things up and move the Draft to April 1, against vigorous resistance.

² Equivocal, as usual.

HALL OF FAME VOTE

Some interesting e-commerce around the league concerning the election of Bruce Sutter to the Hall of Fame. The obvious questions are: 1) why was Sutter elected but not Goose Gosage or Lee Smith, both of whom had vastly superior career numbers?; 2) was Sutter really a better career pitcher than Bert "Be Home" Blyleven?; 3) with 438 home runs and 8 gold gloves, how can Andre Dawson *not* be in the Hall of Fame, especially measured against the mediocre class of 2006?; and 4) does Bruce Sutter really belong in the Hall of Fame, or did he just get in because the Baseball Writers Association felt obliged to send at least one warm body to Cooperstown?

On the first several points, the debate could rage for ages. On the final point, I loved the commentary by Joe Sheehan of *Prospectus Today*, which Possum shared with us via his recent e-mail. His point, in essence, is why should a low tide float all the old boats? Just because there wasn't a Tony Gwynn or a Cal Ripken, Jr., eligible this year, why should Bruce Sutter's stock have suddenly gone up 56 votes, and why should thirteen of the other fourteen carryover candidates have received increased votes in 2006 over past years? Sheehan hits the nail right on the head.

Of course, there has to be a controversy with any vote, to give all of us Hot Stove Leaguers something to argue about during the cold winter months. This year's debate over Sutter vs. Gosage, Sutter vs. Smith, Dawson vs. Rice, and whether any candidate this year was worthy for induction will pale drastically in comparison to next January's discourse over the HOF vote on Mark McGwire. Personally, I can't wait.

GOOD READING

A long time ago I promised to circulate a list from *Skipper's Book Club* of the ten best baseball books of all time. I've mentioned a few of them over the years in my *From the Bullpen* ramblings, but I don't believe that I've ever provided a composite list. With no further remarks necessary, I give you

SKIPPER'S TOP 10 FAVORITE BASEBALL BOOKS

10. *To Every Thing A Season*, Bruce Kuklick (1991)
9. *The Boys of Summer*, Roger Kahn (1973)
8. *Men at Work*, George Will (1989)
7. *Ball Four*, Jim Bouton (1976)
6. *Summer of '49*, David Halberstam (1989)
5. *Beyond the Boys of Summer*, Roger Kahn (2001)
4. *The Catcher was a Spy*, Nicholas Dawidoff (1994)
3. *Moneyball*, Michael Lewis (2003)
2. *October Men*, Roger Kahn (2003)
1. *Why Time Begins on Opening Day*, Tom Boswell (1984)

A few comments on the above are in order:

- ** This list is not intended to be a paean to Roger Kahn even though I have listed three of his books in the Top 10. I have read at least two of his other baseball books, *The Head Game* and *Memories of Summer*, and found them to be somewhat repetitive of his other works, and at times a bit maudlin. For my money, however, you won't find a baseball writer who has Kahn's vocabulary and his ability to turn a phrase, although Boswell can at times give him a run for the money.
- ** The No. 10 book on my list, *To Every Thing a Season*, was a terrific historical read but not a favorite of the masses because it dealt almost singularly with Shibe Park in Philadelphia. You won't find it in many bookstores, so if anybody wants to borrow my copy, let me know.
- ** If anybody hasn't read *The Catcher was a Spy*, you need to. It is a real page-turner, and Mo Berg was undeniably one of the most interesting characters to don a major league uniform.
- ** I haven't read *Ball Four* for at least twenty years, and need to read it again to remind myself why I remember it so fondly. If I do, I'll let you know.
- ** There were many great books that easily could have made the list, and in particular, *Lords of the Realm*, *The Babe*, *The Iron Horse*, *Bunts*, and biographies that I have read on Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Walter Johnson, John McGraw and Hank Greenberg, the titles of which I am unable to recall. In retrospect, I probably should elevate *Lords of the Realm* to the Top 10, as it is the seminal analysis of the business of baseball, from the reserve clause to arbitration to free agency. A long, but fascinating study.

That's it for this issue, boys. Have a good one.

Skipper