



# From the Bullpen

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2008 Season

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June 18, 2008

## TRIP REDUX

Thanks again to everyone who participated in the 2008 Trip to our nation's capital, a first for the men of the Hot Stove League. It was indeed a monumental occasion, and the eight participants (Shamu, McJester, B.T., Possum, Tricko, Itchie, Screech and Skipper) who were able to paddle their own canoes down the Anacostia River to brand-spanking new Nationals Park had another great adventure to file away in the memory bank, as so aptly recounted by Itchie in his much-heralded Special Edition of *The Jiggernaut*. Well done, my brothers, and thanks to all of you who made the commitment to attend. Thanks to Tricko and Possum for lining up game tickets.

I trust you all enjoyed the photos from our 2008 Trip, which were included in and with Itchie's *Jiggernaut* publication. However, I forgot to include one random picture taken on that junket, which you will find at the end of this edition. If you know this man, my advice to you is to hide the women and children.

## TRIP UPDATE

If you hit the link for HSL Trips, you will see that Linda has updated our list of HSL trips to include our trifecta at Nationals Park. We are now at a total of 24 Trips, 21 Cities, 27 Ballparks, 27 Teams, and 59 Games. Man, are there a lot of memories accumulated over these 24 years. I feel like the luckiest man in the world to have been fortunate enough to attend all of these great excursions.

You will also note that we are updating and upgrading the Trip link. Eventually, we hope to have photographs and the newsletter recap available on a year-by-year basis on this link. Bear with us as we work to improve our site.

## TRIP 2009: ONE FOR THE AGES

Even though the 2008 Trip is not even two weeks past, I am already fired up for next year's Trip To End All Trips to New York City and Cooperstown. For our 25th year of Hot Stove League baseball, and our 25th Trip, we need to have perfect attendance, 13 out of 13, so please be sure to hold open on your 2009 calendar the months of June, July, August and September. You may as well inform your spouse right now that you will be leaving town for four days during this window of time in 2009, and that she is not to schedule anything which might conflict with our 2009 Trip, or at least, nothing that you would be expected to attend. Until the 2009 baseball schedule comes out, which will probably be in December of this year, we must all keep these four months absolutely open so that when we identify a weekend in which both the Yankees and the Mets will be in town, we can act on it and schedule our 25th Anniversary Trip. No exceptions, no excuses. We need to have the entire baker's dozen in attendance.

Since the planning for this year's Trip was a bit sporadic (I'm not complaining, just reporting), I will be happy to take the bull by the horns and be the Planning Director for the 2009 Trip. However, I would like to recruit at least one or two others to assist me in the capacities of Social Chairman and Toadie, the former to make sure that the Trip participants are at all times properly primed and nourished (Foster Thielen would seem to be a natural for this spot, but I don't want to put any pressure on him to say yes), and the latter to mindlessly carry out my dictatorial commands. Let me know if you are up for it.

### **BRONX CHEER**

Although also included on the Message Board, since it bears repeating, I include here my thoughts and memories of my recent visit to Yankee Stadium for the Tuesday night game against the Padres, together with a copy of my ticket stub. What a night!

June 17, 2008

Men

Tonight's message comes to you from my hotel in Queens, NY, where I am staying the night before a depo tomorrow morning in Great Neck. I just rolled in on Bus # M60 after transferring off the #4 Green Line train from the Bronx at 125th & Lexington, an interesting place to catch a bus if there ever was one. I came up out of the subway and found myself shoulder to shoulder with people of many colors and cultures, just outside the cheery New Harlem deli. There were at least 10 different languages being shouted (not spoken) at my bus stop, and none of them resembled English. Nonetheless, I found my bus to Queens, enjoyed the ride out of Manhattan and across the river, and made it safely and happily to the inn.

My last (likely) visit to The House that Ruth Built was a memory I will not soon forget. A beautiful evening, an excited and anticipating throng of Yankee lovers, and the promise of an interleague matchup between the Highlanders and the Friars, with the San Diego club in town for a series.

Batting practice was a gas, as I watched 350-game winner Greg Maddux patrolling the outfield and shagging flies like a 21-year-old rookie, joking around and obviously enjoying the show and likely his last series at Yankee Stadium. Watching recent Padre callup Chase Headley was also a treat, as he tried his best not to show his awe at being in this historic palace of baseball for the first time. No doubt he was doing on the field what I was doing from my seat, imagining a shot from the Babe or the Iron Horse or the Mick, leaving the field in a hurry and heading into the upper deck. How difficult would that be, trying to get mentally prepared for your season debut for the parent club, while surrounded by the ghosts of ballplayers past in a hallowed place where 26 World Series have been won? Wow. I can't even imagine.

As I settled into my seat along the 3rd base line in Box 82--about halfway between ARod at third and Johnny Damon in left--I marveled at the sights and sounds and smells of this great baseball ca-

thedral. The sound of Vito the beer vendor shouting "HEY. Whooze Drinkin' He-ahhh?" The smell of brats and polish dogs cooking just outside the concourse. The white facade at the top of the outfield wall, with the AL flags flying at the top of each pillar. The sound of the #4 Green Line rumbling up and away from the platform just outside. What a place.

Although the Padres didn't put up much of a fight, I was treated to ARod's 13th home run of the year, a 400-plus foot blast to the deepest part of Center Field in the bottom of the 2nd to give the Yankees a 1-0 lead; then to Giambi's blast just over the WB Mason Office Supplies sign in Right Field to make it 2-0. I got to see Andy Pettite at the top of his game, mixing 89 mph fastballs with 81 mph cutters, shutting down the Padres hitters completely, and even picking off one of the few runners to reach base against him.

I saw Giambi go long again with his 2nd HR of the game, an opposite field blast that traveled about 405 feet over Left Center. Then it was ARod blasting another shot to Dead Center, a booming double that just missed serving as his 14th homer of the year. And then it was Jorge Posada being seranaded by his adoring fans, to the chanting of "Hip Hip, Jor-ge!", with great feeling and fervor. Grand theatre.

After the game went 4 and 1/2 innings and became official, the team posted the new sign "47 games remaining" to the cheering of the crowd. How great it would be to make it to the final game of this great old ballpark in September, where a Bronx riot is sure to erupt. Anyone game for the game? Don't tempt me.

I will close this out now and sign off, but wanted to share with you all a few good memories of a wonderful visit to a true baseball shrine.

Skip

ACCT. NO. 556126

PC: ISR PRICE \$ 80.00  
TLP: FS TAXES INCL.



THE FINAL SEASON

TUE. JUNE 17, 2008

SAN DIEGO

7:05 PM

FIELD BOX

GATE	SECTION	BOX/ROW	SEAT
2	20	82 H	8



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NO EXCHANGES EXCEPT AS PROVIDED HEREIN. NO REFUNDS. NO RE-ENTRY. TIME, OPPONENT, DATE AND CLUB ROSTERS AND LINEUPS, INCLUDING THE YANKEES' ROSTER AND LINEUP, ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. NO EXCHANGES EXCEPT AS PROVIDED HEREIN. RAIN CHECK SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS SET FORTH ON THE BACK HEREOF.

PC: ISR PRICE \$ 80.00  
TLP: FS TAXES INCL.

FIELD BOX

GATE	SECTION	BOX/ROW	SEAT
2	20	82 H	8

I forgot to mention in my Message Board posting that the new Yankee Stadium is well under way and looks like a beautiful new cathedral that will soon be creating its own memories for all of us, as soon as 2009. And although I didn't get a close-up look at it, my airplane fairly buzzed the new Mets ballpark as we approached LaGuardia Airport (or as all New Yorkers pronounce it, "Lah-Gwah'-Dee-Uh") and from my elevated vantage point, it looks like it will be an enormous improvement over Shea Stadium. If we can fit both of these new ballparks into our 2009 Trip as hoped, it will be a colossal feather in McJester's multi-plumed hat, and a welcome tandem of notches on the belts for the rest of us.

**DIS AND DAT**

(Sorry. Can't get away from Bronxpeak.)

Belated Happy Birthday to Shamu, who turned 50 on June 14. In addition to that accomplishment, Shamu is about to complete the ballpark circuit with his upcoming trip to the Bay Area. After Shamu sees games at AT&T Park and whatever they call the Oakland Coliseum these days, he will have attended games at all 30 of the current ballparks. Well done, Sir Charles. You are a heckuva baseball fan.

Lest I forget next month, let's also extend a premature 50th birthday congratulations to B.T., who will celebrate his half century mark on July 14 at Lake Powell with his family and friends. Remember to tip your glass to B.T. and to Shamu in celebration of their 50th birthdays.

### BOOK REPORT

I just recently finished reading an excellent baseball book, entitled *Three Nights in August*, written by Buzz Bissinger (author of *Friday Night Lights*), and chronicling the managerial career of Tony LaRussa by focusing on a three-game series between the Cardinals and the Cubs in August of 2003. I cannot say that I am more or less of a LaRussa fan after reading this book, but I do have much more of an appreciation of what a manager goes through on a nightly basis. There is one particularly fascinating description of the myriad options that are available to a manager in trying to decide whether to play the infield back or the infield in with runners on the bases and fewer than two outs, which in summary, explains that a manager has about 10 different options or variations on the theme that he must consider and decide upon in the span of about 10 seconds. It is indeed a cerebral game that we love so much.

Bissinger is an eloquent baseball scribe, with a remarkable ability to turn a phrase. A couple of examples follow:

- ▶ He tried to cover for Canseco by claiming that he had an injury; *and Canseco did in fact have an injury, the crippling baseball disease of disinterest that comes with too much security and too much money and too much attention.* Of all the players LaRussa ever managed, no one ever had a more virulent case of it.
- ▶ When you have spent so much of your life in baseball that it becomes your life—when you have managed thousands of games and thousands of players—you see the timeline and transformation of the game from a unique point of privilege. . . . *You see the rise of the sinker as the preferred pitch and the neglect of the forkball like an old widow.*
- ▶ (On Cal Eldred, a LaRussa reclamation project) He went through Tommy John surgery. He suffered a small fracture in his right elbow and then a stress fracture below his right elbow, requiring the insertion of the five inch screw to somehow patch it back together. It isn't unusual for a pitcher to miss an entire season because of arm troubles and then come back. *Arm troubles are to pitchers what girl troubles are to country singers.*

*Three Nights in August* is a good read, and one that should be read by all good baseball men, including the twelve of you. Get after it.

### JUST FOR LAUGHS

It was on this year's Trip that Tricko pointed out that Screech, as the newest entrant in our league, did not have in his possession the packet of materials that we put together for all of you to commemorate the 200th edition of *From the Bullpen*, entitled *The Best of From the Bullpen*. So, I rifled through my cupboard of crap at home (many of you know that I save everything, including apartment leases from 1985 and before), and I found an extra copy of same to give to Screech. As I flipped through the booklet to remind myself of what is in it, I got a few laughs out of reading some of the old newsletters and rebuttals, including some of the old "Top Tens" that have been composed over the years. One of my favorites was a Top Ten list that was published back on August 16, 1995, which bears repeating here:

**BOB'Z TOP TEN REEZINS  
FOR TAKEEN NECTS YEER'S HSL  
TRYP TO BRAN-SUN**

10. Kan stay at Roy Klark's Buteeful Lodje ov the Ozarcs.
9. Mi traylor parc gave mee 10 free passes to Minny Purl's show.
8. I no Jon Cruk and he runz the Tilta-Worl.
7. Fun two watch Hilbilee witling baseball batz.
6. Cheep moter couch fair frum Omahah—and 27 hourz to play cards en root!
5. Se'en Elvas personatur bettur then unacysted tripul play.
4. I kin winn a spieling bea their.
3. Pe-pul there don't ware stinking fezzuz.
2. All U Kan Eat gritz and gravey at the Pos-some Haus.
1. We kan stay at my knew traylor home there: Weezul's Nest.

**WEEK 12 STANDINGS**

Provided below are the league standings through 12 weeks of play, including games of Sunday, June 15, 2008:

1.	Blues	5475
2.	Cubs	5249.6
3.	Wahoos	5226.3
4.	Chiefs	4957.0
5.	Bears	4922.8
6.	Monarchs	4838.4
7.	Highlanders	4805.9
8.	Bombers	4794.4
9.	Tigers	4740.3
10.	Skipjacks	4707.5
11.	Redbirds	4654.4
12.	Senators	4524.7

13. Tribe 4513.5

**POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 12**

1.	Wahoos	597.5
2.	Highlanders	572.9
3.	Senators	539.3
4.	Blues	538.6
5.	Tigers	483.8
6.	Bears	470.3
7.	Skipjacks	435.7
8.	Redbirds	429.3
9.	Monarchs	421.3
10.	Chiefs	420.6
11.	Cubs	403.1
12.	Bombers	351.2
13.	Tribe	298.1

**SKIPPER'S TO-DO LIST**

I am still working on updating our summary of league trips, to include the three games from 2008, as well as my revised ballpark rankings. As soon as these have been completed, I will have them posted on the website and alert you accordingly.

**NEXT WEEK**

June 25: *The Whale's Tale* by Shamu.



On a short furlough from the State Pen, Scott "Nothing to Lose" Krause provided comforting protection to his Hot Stove League pals on their recent visit to the mean streets of D.C. during the 2008 HSL Trip.