

THE BELLYFLOP

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2014 Season

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GUEST COLUMNIST PROTOCOL

Thanks to Johnny “Kain Colter” Thielen and his landmark disregard for guest columnist protocol, he has successfully created a “Pass the Gun” card that the rest of us can use at our own discretion. The next time the guest columnist Russian roulette gun is slid over to one of us with a round in the chamber, we can now legally slide it over to the next guest columnist. In fact, I was seriously thinking about spinning the chamber and handing it over to Ted who is next in line and happens to be the current leader. His comments and observations would carry much more weight than any rambling I might come up with. But I’m going to tuck that gold card in my wallet and play it at a later date and ramble away for now.

HSL MEMORIES

Although my memory has faded almost as fast as my chances of winning, I’ve already won with the memories I have and hope to add to in the next 30 years.

I still remember my first year, I showed up to Dave’s house excited about being part of a baseball fantasy league and I was looking forward to meeting the guys who would be kicking my ass for the next 29 years. I got all my stuff together and called Denny to offer my condolences to him for not making the cut to be accepted that year. His body of work just wasn’t quite where it needed to be yet. He said no hard feelings, wished me good luck, and told me to be sure and draft Mike Heath early, which I did.

I did get one of the best tips I’ve ever received in the 29 years I’ve been in this league that first year. Dave asked me if I wanted something to drink. “Sure, I’ll have a Pepsi.” And he brought me a Diet Coke, which was, for me, like drinking brown carbonated Alka-Seltzer water. “Once you start drinking diet you’ll never go back to regular pop,” he said, and by golly he was right.

Now when I have to drink a Pepsi or Coke heavy, it's like drinking hummingbird water that tastes like diabetes. Thanks, Dave!

My idea for this *Bellyflop* was to re-tell the past drafts, but I can't remember any of them other than that first one. It seems odd that I can remember things that happened a long time ago yet I have trouble with current events; I think there is a word for that but it escapes me.

BABYSITTING

Changing to the Yahoo format has been one of the biggest changes that I can think of that has happened in our league and it has definitely had a significant impact on how we prepare and manage our teams. It's been a good change for some and a more time-challenging change for others. It rewards those who spend the most attention on their teams and punishes those who don't. It's like a 6-month babysitting gig—you take your eyes off them for a second and they're wandering out into traffic. I love kids as much as the next guy but there are times when you just want to leave the door open.

MITCH

Mitch wandered off the reservation last year to the tune of a lower division finish, only his third lower division finish in his illustrious career. When Mitch went all Sheldon Cooper on Big Guy's e-mail door..... Big Guy!.....Big Guy!.....Big Guy!.....Big Guy!.....you can sign us up now.....you can sign us up now.....you can sign us up now..... It gave us all an indication of his dislike of the "hood" he found himself in last year. If legend and Wikipedia are correct about the tenacity of lawyers, it could be a long season for the rest of us. I think he's serious about "movin on up to the eastside."

CHUCK AND DENNY

I see Chuck showed up to get the tiles for his Scrabble game, and after arranging and re-arranging 150 to 200 tiles during the course of the season, he somehow finds a way to spell W-I-N-N-E-R. Denny says he's going to give Chuck a run for his money on the total number of transactions this year, but he has all Q's and no U's so will see how that works out for him.

SCREECH

Screech is my hero; he proves my theory year after year. I don't think anyone with the exception of Ted comes to the draft more prepared than Jeff, and year after year that preparation takes a backseat to Ol' Lady Luck. If could-of, would-of, should-of, might-of, or maybe counted for anything, Jeff could-of, would-of, should-of, might-of, maybe been celebrating a couple of championships by now.

TIREBITER

I think we should change Jim's nickname from Tirebiter to Ethel. With an amazing six second-place finishes, only Ethel Mertz has played second fiddle longer.

JOHNNY

Johnny has won five championships and David Blaine's mouth is hanging open. If he can't figure out how he did it, I'm not even going to try.

NOT WINNING

When I told a fellow worker that I have been in a rotisserie league for the past 29 years, he seemed impressed until I told him that I had never won. **"WHAT! YOU'VE NEVER WON IN 29 YEARS!"** Geez, it's not like I brought red wine to a fish dinner. I do have to admit that after

hearing it out loud it really got me to thinking. Mouse, Ethel, Screech, you should all be ashamed of yourselves.

Every year I try to analyze what I can do to make my team better. What moves can I do to add and subtract from my team, what does it take to be a Hot Stove League Billy Beane? For me?.....oh, about 10 beers. I manage the hell out of them on weekend nights. So this year I installed a breathalyzer on my computer that kicks in at 10:30 pm every night to keep me from starting any kitchen fires on my team. Last year I had a few late night infernos that got out of containment that kept me in my fire tent longer than I would have liked. Why is there is so much difference between dry firing an idea as compared to actually pulling the trigger? When I do finally squeeze one off a fire starts quicker than a joint getting lit in Denver. Maybe I'm selling myself short.....on the beers that is. Maybe I'm not drinking enough? You see, I like that idea right out of the chute, yet I just can't shake this feeling.....

MICROWAVABLE POT PIE

Speaking of kitchen fires, one of the best inventions has to be the microwavable pot pie. Back in the day, after the bars would close I can't count the number of times I would come home, put a pot pie in the oven, wait 15 minutes for it to preheat, hit the timer for **40 minutes** and promptly fall asleep and wake up to a fire alarm and a smoke-filled kitchen. I'm not exactly sure how long the process takes, but some of those pot pies were close to being diamonds by the time I woke up. I don't know why I felt the need to share that, but damn! That was a good invention.

DIMINISHED EYESIGHT DURING SEX

I read in my Men's Health magazine that a man's eyesight diminishes significantly during sex, not that I would compare the draft with sex, I wouldn't go down that road..... except I'm already half way there, I'll just finish my thought. Does anyone else get the feeling that they

are drafting in a fog that immediately lifts right after the draft? It's like someone just opened up the door to the steam room and my team looks like some fat naked guy. When we're looking at everyone's team afterwards I always think to myself, why didn't I take that guy? Why did I take that guy? Where was that guy? Who is that guy? I am currently experiencing an emotional disconnect with my team that has me reaching for the Viagra bottle. The 10 beers and 5 pot pies have worn off and I can't get them out of my house. But that's baseball, and I really, really love draft day.



Jon, I still paddle my own canoe, I'm just an oar short right now.

IN SUMMARY

All in all, it has been an incredible ride. I never would have guessed it would have turned out the way it has and I never would have guessed that after that first draft, 27 years later I would have drafted from a beautiful condo in Scottsdale, Arizona, and I **really** never would have guessed that I would have sucked for this long, and I **really, really** never would have guessed the long-term side-effects of drinking Diet Coke.

Underbelly