

FROM THE BULLPEN

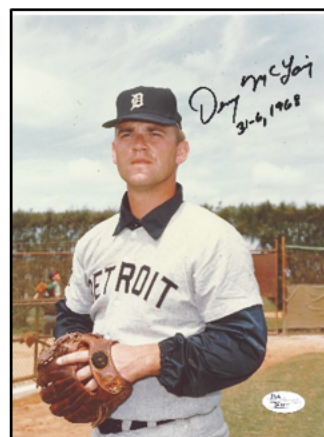
The Nebraska Hot Stove League



of the Summer of '68, "The Year of the Pitcher"



Bob Gibson



Denny McLain

2018 Campaign

Edition No. 3

April 18, 2018

Gentlemen:

Sorry it's been so long between *Bullpens*, but the press of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness has prevented me from tending to my league duties. Anyway, here are the standings and point totals through games of April 15, 2018:

STANDINGS THROUGH WEEK 3

1	Bums	1300.0	-
2	Senators	1231.5	68.5
3	Chiefs	1197.4	102.6
4	Wahoos	1181.5	118.5
5	Redbirds	1128.9	171.1
6	Monarchs	1089.0	211.0
7	Tigers	1086.2	213.8
8	Cubs	1060.2	239.8
9	Blues	1050.7	249.3
10	Bears	1025.3	274.7

11	Skipjacks	1006.1	293.9
12	Tribe	935.6	364.4
13	Bombers	920.7	379.3

POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 3

1	Wahoos	508.2
2	Monarchs	488.0
3	Blues	447.2
4	Bums	444.2
5	Tigers	436.0
6	Skipjacks	434.8
7	Senators	429.4
8	Chiefs	419.7
9	Bears	414.8
10	Redbirds	413.6
11	Cubs	386.6
12	Tribe	356.4
13	Bombers	288.9

As predicted on Draft Day, it would appear that the **Bums** are the class of the league, and as likely as any other team to bust up the **Wahoos'** dynasty. The **Chiefs** also appear to be a contender once again, a surprise to none of us given B.T.'s unlimited disposable income and one-track mind, two essential components for competitiveness in this league.

OTHER COMMENTS

- With all of the rainouts that have been experienced so far, it's hard to know if the current standings are truly reflective of the quality of the teams in our league, or skewed because of the disparity in games played by members of different teams. A month from now, we should have a clearer picture of which teams are most likely to compete for the 2018 HSL title.

Here are the Top 10 Pitchers and Hitters through games of last night:

PITCHERS

1.	Max Scherzer	Tigers	127.0
2.	Patrick Corbin	Tigers	126.0
2.	Corey Kluber	Redbirds	126.0

4.	Justin Verlander	Blues	120.0
5.	Gerrit Cole	Wahoos	106.0
6.	Clayton Kershaw	Chiefs	102.0
7.	Sean Manaea	Senators	100.0
8.	Carlos Martínez	Monarchs	97.0
9.	Luis Severino	Bombers	95.0
10.	Chris Sale	Bums	94.0

HITTERS

1.	Bryce Harper	Chiefs	118.0
2.	Mookie Betts	Monarchs	103.6
3.	Didi Gregorius	Tigers	103.3
4.	Jed Lowrie	Wahoos	93.3
5.	Aaron Judge	Bombers	90.6
5.	Matt Chapman	Bums	90.6
7.	Mike Trout	Wahoos	89.5
8.	DJ LeMahieu	Senators	86.2
9.	Ozzie Albies	Chiefs	84.5
10.	Charlie Blackmon	Tigers	83.2

OTHER COMMENTS

- It's hard to believe that the **Tigers** are only in 7th place at this point in the season, since they have the top 2 scoring pitchers, Scherzer and Corbin, and 2 of the top 10 scoring hitters, Gregorius and Blackmon. The rest of the **Tiger** team must really suck.
- Who are Matt Chapman of the **Bums** and Ozzie Albies of the **Chiefs**? Top 10 hitters, that's who. Never heard of 'em.
- What incantation did PAwesome utter to rejuvenate the career of one Jed Lowrie, the 4th highest scoring hitter with 93.3 points? I would have guessed that Lowrie had hung up his spikes several years ago.

MOVIE REVIEW: *The Winning Team*

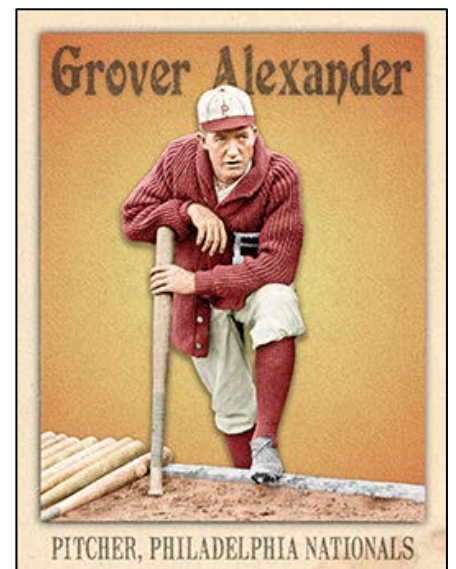


This past weekend I took advantage of the inclement weather to stay inside and watch a DVD I purchased a number of years ago but have never watched, a black and white classic starring Ronald Reagan and Doris Day entitled *The Winning Team*, the story of Grover Cleveland Alexander of Elba, Nebraska. Or rather, a *fantasy* loosely based on the life of Grover Cleveland Alexander.

The movie begins with Reagan as teenaged Alexander working up on a telephone pole near Central City, Nebraska, when he gets word that the local baseball nine needed a pitcher for an afternoon game against a traveling professional team from Galesburg, Illinois. Alexander incurs the wrath of his eventual bride, played by Doris, when he blows off a dinner gathering with her and takes the mound to toss a shutout against the Galesburg professionals, paying them back for rudely catcalling him a "hayseed."

As depicted in the movie, after first signing and playing for the Galesburg team and then another minor league team in Buffalo, Alexander goes on to greatness as a pitcher with the Philadelphia Phillies, setting a rookie record with 28 wins in 1911. In 1916, he set a Major League mark which will stand for all time, by twirling 16 shutouts on the way to a 33-12 record. However, during World War I he served overseas in the European theater and was exposed to Kraut mustard gas and mortar fire which reportedly left him with epilepsy and some degree of post-traumatic stress disorder (although they didn't call it that then) which plagued him the rest of his life, and which reportedly led to his lifetime of fighting the demon spirits.

Happily, the movie ends with Alexander winning two games for the St. Louis Cardinals in the 1926 World Series, and then coming in to pitch--reportedly gravely hungover-- in relief in Game 7 against the vaunted Bombers, inheriting loaded bases and the dangerous hitter Tony "Poosh 'Em Up" Lazzeri in the bottom of the 7th. After an Alexander offering to Lazzeri was blasted to left field and looked to be a grand slam before hooking foul, Alexander retired Lazzeri to get out of the inning, and then retired the Yankees in the 8th and 9th innings to preserve the win for the Gashouse Gang. Some of you may remember that Game 7 ended with Babe Ruth being thrown out at second by



about a mile on a steal attempt, after he was walked by Alexander with two outs in the 9th inning.

The Winning Team ends on this heroic and happy note, conveniently ignoring the fact that Alexander's wife Aimee subsequently divorced him for the *first* time (the couple remarried in 1931, and divorced again in 1941) and that *Oi' Pete* washed out of the Majors with the Cardinals in 1930 and then pitched for the House of David barnstorming team for almost a decade to fund his epic *John Barleycorn* habit. Tragically, arguably the greatest Nebraska-born pitcher of all time lived out his final years panhandling on the streets of St. Paul, Nebraska, a hopeless drunk.

Apart from the poetic license taken by the makers of *The Winning Team*, the movie [FN 1] is at least mildly interesting for being a period piece, and Doris Day [FN 2] is at her best as the cute, charming, girl-next-door. And Ronald Reagan was an above-average president.

THREE DOG NIGHT REVISITED



2018 (They look happy just to be alive.)



1969

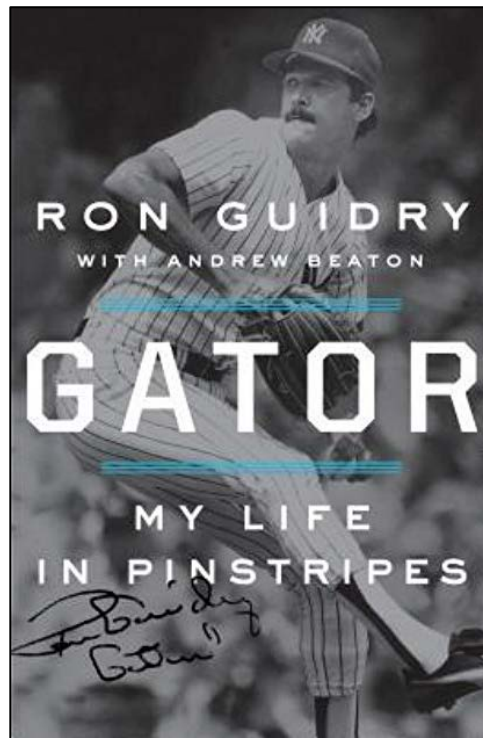
Last week I had occasion to watch a local concert put on by Three Dog Night, at a private event at the SAC Museum near Mahoney Park. It was even better than I had anticipated, as the group played hit after hit from the 1970s which I recognized from one of my very first 8-track tapes. The band leader, who is now 75 years old but could easily pass for 72, reminded us that the band had more than 20 consecutive top 40 hits in their heyday, all of which they played for us at this event:

Mama Told Me (Not to Come)	07/11/70	Peaked at #1
Joy to the World	04/17/71	Peaked at #1
Black & White	09/16/72	Peaked at #1
Shambala	07/28/73	Peaked at #3
Easy to be Hard	09/27/69	Peaked at #4
An Old Fashioned Love Song	12/18/71	Peaked at #4
The Show Must Go On	05/25/74	Peaked at #4
One	06/28/69	Peaked at #5
Never Been to Spain	02/12/72	Peaked at #5
Liar	08/28/71	Peaked at #7
Eli's Coming	11/29/69	Peaked at #10
The Family of Man	04/29/72	Peaked at #12
Celebrate	03/28/70	Peaked at #15
Out in the Country	10/17/70	Peaked at #15
Sure as I'm Sittin' Here	08/10/74	Peaked at #16
Pieces of April	01/13/73	Peaked at #19
Let Me Serenade You	12/01/73	Peaked at #17
One Man Band	01/09/71	Peaked at #19

Try a Little Tenderness	04/19/69	Peaked at #29
Til the World Ends	08/16/75	Peaked at #32
Play Something Sweet (Brickyard Blues)	11/16/74	Peaked at #33

Now *that* was some sweet music. Not like the dismal crap coursing through the airwaves these days.

BOOK REPORT:
GATOR: My Life in Pinstripes



I just recently finished reading a book that was a Christmas gift from Linda that arrived in the mail last month, *Gator*, subtitled *My Life in Pinstripes*, by Ron Guidry (Crown Archetype (March 20, 2018)). It is a fun and uncomplicated read, spoken in plain English by one of the greatest Yankee pitchers of all time.

There is nothing particularly controversial in this book by and about Guidry, and I'm not sure that I learned anything from it that I hadn't heard before, but his recounting of the tumultuous year of 1977, after Steinbrenner signed Reggie Jackson and added his superstar ego to an already volatile equation, makes the book worth reading. The quote that was attributed to Reggie Jackson in *Sport* magazine in June 1977 (his third month as a Yankee player), set the stage for a storied feud between Jackson and Thurman Munson:

"I'm the straw that stirs the drink . . . Munson thinks he can be the straw that stirs the drink, but he can only stir it bad."

Anyway, if any of you want to borrow my copy of Gator, let me know.

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And that's a wrap for this week, fellows. Back at you again in a couple of weeks.

Skipper

[FN 1] The respected movie critic Bill James once described the movie as "an awful movie, a Reader's Digest movie, reducing the events of Alexander's life to a cliché." True that.

[FN 2] Born **Doris Mary Ann Kappelhoff** but shortened to "Doris Day" because Jewish artists weren't getting many good gigs those days. Of interest, the actress who often played an innocent young flower was actually quite the vixen in real life, having bedded down many of Hollywood's leading men and power brokers, and having been married four times. According to my research, Ms. Day is still alive at age 96, and recorded an album as recently as 2011.