

# FROM THE BULLPEN



Bob Gibson

## The Nebraska Hot Stove League



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



Denny McLain

2018 Campaign

Edition No. 6

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### BUMS RUSH TO FRONT OF LINE

Gentlemen:

Pardon the interruption, but somehow I have managed to allow several fortnights to pass since my last report on the Hot Stove League standings and other matters of national importance and mutual concern. Sorry I blew up. In any event, when last we looked, the villainous **Wahoos** were heading the standings, followed by the Bridesmaid Revisited **Crimson Chirpers**, while the **Bums** of Sir Tricko were plodding along in 3rd. Since that time, Magpie's charges have kicked it into overdrive and are now leading the league with a 152.1 margin over the **Chirpers**.

Here are the league standings, top to bottom, through June 24, 2018:

1	Bums	6251.5	-
2	Redbirds	6099.4	152.1
3	Wahoos	6043.4	208.1
4	Cubs	5801.4	450.1
5	Monarchs	5651.1	600.4
6	Skipjacks	5648.1	603.4
7	Bears	5628.6	622.9
8	Tigers	5617.0	634.5
9	Chiefs	5608.9	642.6

10	Senators	5543.2	708.3
11	Blues	5487.4	764.1
12	Bombers	5385.8	865.7
13	Tribe	5099.4	1152.1

**POINTS FOR WEEK 13  
ENDING JUNE 24, 2018**

1	Bums	602.1
2	Wahoos	532.0
3	Redbirds	528.1
4	Senators	507.0
5	Chiefs	474.3
6	Tribe	470.0
7	Skipjacks	450.1
8	Bears	448.3
9	Monarchs	439.8
10	Cubs	405.4
11	Tigers	332.8
12	Blues	321.5
13	Bombers	319.7

**TOP 25 PITCHERS**

1.	Max Scherzer	Tigers	490.0
2.	Justin Verlander	Blues	481.0
3.	Corey Kluber	Redbirds	465.0
4.	Gerrit Cole	Wahoos	449.0
5.	Chris Sale	Bums	435.0
6.	Luis Severino	Bombers	433.0
7.	Jacob deGrom	Skipjacks	397.0
8.	Trevor Bauer	Redbirds	393.0
9.	Aaron Nola	Monarchs	380.0
10.	José Berríos	Tribe	358.0
11.	Blake Snell	Bears	357.0
T12.	Patrick Corbin	Tigers	353.0
T12.	Charlie Morton	Redbirds	353.0
14.	James Paxton	Bombers	336.0
15.	Rick Porcello	Chiefs	331.0
16.	Miles Mikolas	Skipjacks	327.0
17.	Jon Lester	Wahoos	317.0
T18.	Mike Clevinger	Senators	313.0
T18.	J.A. Happ	Tribe	313.0
20.	Sean Newcomb	Bums	311.0
21.	Lance McCullers Jr.	Bears	309.0

22.	Zack Greinke	Cubs	298.0
23.	Sean Manaea	Senators	297.0
24.	Ross Stripling	Bears	288.0
25.	Dylan Bundy	Bums	284.0

#### WHO'S HOT -- PITCHERS

1.	Chris Sale	Bums	73.0
2.	Trevor Bauer	Redbirds	71.0
3.	José Berríos	Tribe	63.0
4.	Zack Greinke	Cubs	58.0
5.	Trevor Williams	Monarchs	54.0
6.	Jacob deGrom	Skipjacks	48.0
7.	Eric Lauer	Skipjacks	47.0
T8.	Nick Pivetta	Bears	43.0
T8.	Dereck Rodríguez	Skipjacks	43.0
10.	Madison Bumgarner	Bums	40.0
T11.	Corey Kluber	Redbirds	39.0
T11.	Gerrit Cole	Wahoos	39.0
13.	Shane Bieber	Redbirds	38.0
T14.	Patrick Corbin	Tigers	37.0
T14.	Rick Porcello	Chiefs	37.0
T14.	Mike Clevinger	Senators	37.0
T14.	Mike Leake	Bums	37.0
T18.	Carlos Rodón	Bears	36.0
T18.	Ivan Nova	Cubs	36.0
T18.	Freddy Peralta	Senators	36.0
T18.	Jon Gray	Chiefs	36.0
T18.	Jack Flaherty	Bums	36.0
23.	Andrew Suárez	Cubs	35.0
T24.	Rich Hill	Senators	34.0
T24.	Miles Mikolas	Skipjacks	34.0

#### WHO'S NOT -- PITCHERS

T1.	Steven Wright	Cubs	-18.0
T1.	Chad Kuhl	Wahoos	-18.0
T3.	Robert Gsellman	Redbirds	-15.0
T3.	Jason Hammel	Tigers	-15.0
5.	Matthew Boyd	Cubs	-14.0
6.	Jake Odorizzi	Monarchs	-13.0
7.	Dan Straily	Blues	-11.0
8.	Chad Bettis	Blues	-10.0
9.	Carlos Martínez	Monarchs	-9.0
10.	Joe Musgrove	Monarchs	-8.0

11.	Joey Lucchesi	Tribe	-7.0
T12.	Eduardo Rodriguez	Bombers	-6.0
T12.	Daniel Mengden	Bombers	-6.0
T12.	Wade LeBlanc	Skipjacks	-6.0
T15.	Tanner Roark	Tigers	-5.0
T15.	Julio Teheran	Bears	-5.0
17.	Dylan Covey	Skipjacks	-4.0
18.	José Quintana	Monarchs	-3.0
19.	Reynaldo López	Wahoos	-2.0
T20.	Aaron Sanchez	Skipjacks	-1.0
T20.	Seth Lugo	Wahoos	-1.0
T20.	Blaine Hardy	Tigers	-1.0

### TOP 25 HITTERS

1.	Mike Trout	Wahoos	424.3
2.	José Ramírez	Redbirds	382.6
3.	J.D. Martinez	Skipjacks	365.6
4.	Francisco Lindor	Blues	357.3
5.	Nolan Arenado	Bears	355.8
6.	Freddie Freeman	Bears	350.5
7.	Mookie Betts	Monarchs	337.7
8.	Jose Altuve	Redbirds	331.3
9.	Aaron Judge	Bombers	329.6
10.	Andrew Benintendi	Redbirds	327.1
11.	Manny Machado	Blues	323.1
12.	Trevor Story	Bears	313.6
13.	Paul Goldschmidt	Cubs	313.2
14.	Eddie Rosario	Senators	310.5
15.	Joey Votto	Wahoos	305.7
16.	Ozzie Albies	Chiefs	298.5
17.	Shin-soo Choo	Tigers	298.0
18.	Nick Markakis	Senators	295.9
19.	George Springer	Cubs	290.4
20.	Scooter Gennett	Senators	290.3
21.	Charlie Blackmon	Tigers	289.8
22.	Jean Segura	Redbirds	288.7
23.	Eugenio Suárez	Bums	286.0
24.	Carlos Correa	Skipjacks	284.1
25.	Alex Bregman	Bums	282.4

### WHO'S HOT -- HITTERS

1.	Nolan Arenado	Bears	58.6
2.	Odúbel Herrera	Blues	54.5

3.	Nelson Cruz	Cubs	53.5
4.	Anthony Rendon	Senators	51.6
5.	Francisco Lindor	Blues	51.3
6.	Yadier Molina	Redbirds	49.2
7.	Giancarlo Stanton	Bums	49.0
8.	José Ramírez	Redbirds	46.8
9.	Matt Carpenter	Wahoos	45.2
10.	José Bautista	Bombers	45.1
11.	Joey Votto	Wahoos	44.9
12.	Matt Olson	Tribe	43.0
T13.	Jose Altuve	Redbirds	42.4
T13.	Mitch Moreland	Wahoos	42.4
15.	Derek Dietrich	Tigers	41.5
16.	Brandon Nimmo	Wahoos	41.0
T17.	Edwin Encarnacion	Bombers	40.0
T17.	Shin-soo Choo	Tigers	40.0
19.	Kendrys Morales	Wahoos	38.6
20.	Jason Kipnis	Chiefs	37.9
21.	Carlos Santana	Wahoos	37.7
22.	Cody Bellinger	Monarchs	37.5
23.	Mark Trumbo	Senators	37.2
24.	Eugenio Suárez	Bums	35.7
25.	J.D. Martinez	Skipjacks	35.5

#### WHO'S NOT -- HITTERS

1.	Mark Reynolds	Redbirds	-4.0
2.	John Hicks	Bombers	-3.8
3.	Josh Harrison	Skipjacks	-2.5
4.	José Pirela	Bombers	-1.8
5.	Ehire Adrianza	Tigers	-1.5
6.	Mike Zunino	Cubs	-1.2
7.	Colin Moran	Redbirds	-0.8
8.	Corey Dickerson	Redbirds	-0.5
9.	Whit Merrifield	Tigers	-0.3

#### ***A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT***

A while back, while looking for a different book at Barnes & Noble, I picked up a book by the author Norman Maclean, which included *A River Runs Through It* and a couple of other short novellas by Maclean. Great reading.

Maclean, a native of Montana who was one of two sons of a stern, fly-fishing Presbyterian minister, went on to be educated at Dartmouth University and became a professor of

English at the University of Chicago. He wrote *A River Runs Through It*, his first published work, when he was in his 70s. Robert Redford, who read the book and thought it would make a great movie, spent a substantial amount of time and effort to earn Maclean's trust and ultimately his permission to make the movie. Unfortunately, Maclean died just a few months before the movie was released, in 1992.

Having finally re-remembered how to work our DVD player on our home entertainment system FN 1, I watched the movie *A River Runs Through It* this past weekend, starring Brad Pitt as the younger Maclean brother and Tom Skerrett as the Presbyterian minister father. I faintly recall watching the same movie about 15 years ago, but do not remember it having the same impact on me. Perhaps it is because I recently read the book and a little bit about Maclean in the prefatory pages, or maybe it's because I've just become a sentimental old fool in my seventh decade, but I cried like a baby at several points throughout the movie, and most especially--spoiler alert here--when Maclean the Younger met his tragic and premature demise.

I would not characterize myself as a Brad Pitt fan per se, but his early work in *A River Runs Through It* is really quite good, maybe not *Inglorious Basterds* good, but good nonetheless.

My favorite lines from the book are at the very beginning:

*In our family there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing.*

And at the very end:

*Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of those rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs.*

## **DOCTOR MY EYES**

DME is my favorite Jackson Browne song, and one that I got to hear performed live for a second time last Friday night at the Jackson Browne concert at Pinewood Bowl in Pioneers Park. The dude was awesome, as was his entire band, and the venue FN 2 was spectacular. I bought seats in the front row as a surprise for Michele, but then she ended up not being able to go with me because she needed to go down to Florida to visit a good friend who is getting medical treatment there, so my daughter Savannah, who had never even heard of Jackson Browne, joined me for the concert. She loved it, thought that he was a great musician. I told her that I was just about her age when I saw him the first time at *Summer Rock II* at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City where he performed as part of a star-studded lineup which included the Eagles, Joe Walsh (before he began playing *with* the Eagles), and Linda Ronstadt. Remarkably, Browne's voice is still as mellifluous and rangy as ever, in

spite of the fact that he has probably been performing for at least fifty years and has to be in his 70s.



As the night wore on, I was amazed at the number of gray-haired lawyers and doctors from Omaha who were at the concert, and I wondered to myself if any of them had been to see Browne at the *Summer Rock II* concert back in the summer of '78 or '79, or when he was last in Lincoln many years ago with Bonnie Raitt.

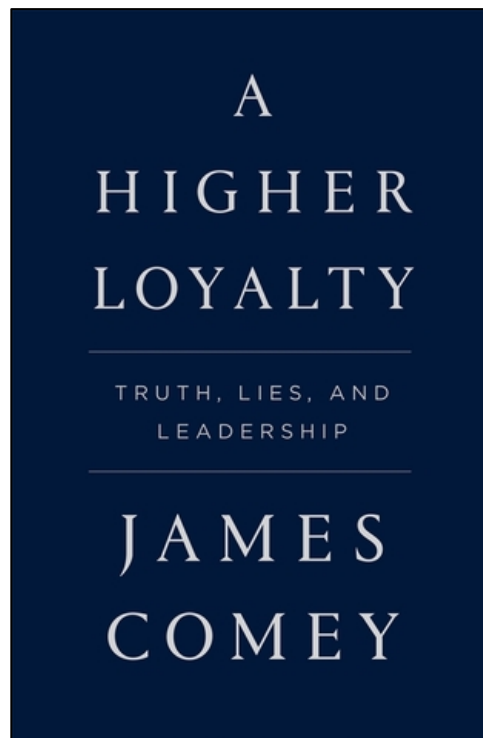




One of the highlights of the evening was when Browne played a song that he co-wrote with Glenn Frey, the Eagles mega-hit FN 3, *Take It Easy*. His performance of that tune prompted one of many, many standing ovations from his adoring, superannuated crowd.



**BOOK REPORT:**  
***A HIGHER LOYALTY*, by James Comey**



A short while back I picked up and read James Comey's book *A Higher Loyalty*, which was interesting and--dare I say--*credible*. If any of you Trumpites are also Deep State conspiracy theorists, you will want to steer away from this book, because it's liable to dispel and disabuse that notion, particularly if you read it with an open mind. FN 4 After reading the introduction and the first chapter, I was pretty sure I was going to dislike Comey and the



book because he comes off as a bit of a *Goodie Two Shoes* with a *Holier-Than-Thou* attitude. However, he soon emerges from that persona and does a nice job of laying out the facts without a great deal of spin. I knew very little about him before reading the book--including the fact that he is 6 feet, 8 inches tall, but never played college basketball--and so I now have a whole new appreciation for both Comey the man and Comey the former FBI Director. His has essentially been a life of public service, and after living off government wages while raising a family in D.C., NYC and Richmond, Virginia, I don't begrudge the guy a bit that he finally made a few bucks writing his book.

A couple of interesting tidbits learned from this recent read:

- As a young boy, he and a brother were home alone without their parents when a burglar broke in and began robbing them, then pulled a gun on them when he discovered that they were home. Yon bandit threatened to kill them and scared the holy crap out of them, and then escaped the clutches of the constabulary responding to a 9-1-1 call.
- The author went to college at William and Mary and then law school at the University of Chicago. While he makes no mention of his academic performance, he must have done really well because he ended up working for Rudy Giuliani as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York. According to Comey, there is nobody on this planet who loves the limelight and publicity more than Rudy G., and any of his foot soldiers who tried to bask in it with him would soon be dispatched to a basement office to handle parking citations. Eventually, quite a few years later, Comey was tapped to return to Manhattan and assume the mantle of U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, the same exact role that Giuliani once filled. Seated in that chair, it was Comey who signed off on the prosecution of Martha Stewart, which is no doubt the main reason that The Donald will soon be pardoning her.
- During the presidency of 43, Comey became the Assistant Attorney General to John Ashcroft, the former senator from Missouri. It was in this capacity that he challenged Bush and Dr. Evil FN 5 on enhanced interrogation techniques, namely, waterboarding. In one of the more fascinating tales from the book, Comey describes how he rushed to a D.C. hospital to try to prevent Bush's Chief of Staff Andrew Card and White House lawyer Alberto Gonzales from coercing a gravely ill John Ashcroft into extending the period for using waterboarding techniques. As part of this tense standoff, both Comey and then-FBI-Director Robert Mueller tendered or threatened to tender their letters of resignation to the president. The prospect of the publicity and embarrassment of this happening ultimately led W to part ways with Dr. Evil on the waterboarding front.
- Comey and his wife experienced the tragic loss of an infant son due to infection with Group B streptococcus. Comey's wife became a crusader on the need for

an answer to this problem, and now virtually every doctor in this country who takes care of pregnant women screens them for the Strep B virus, and if present, inoculates them against the bacteria, saving countless lives.

- When Comey was in law school, because of his elongated status, many of his classmates assumed that he played college basketball, and Comey says that he may have allowed that rumor to spread a bit through his responsive comments and by failing to immediately fess up that he did not ever play college basketball. So heavy did this weigh on his conscience, that years later he made a number of phone calls to his former law school classmates, specifically for the purpose of blowing the whistle on himself and setting the record straight. FN 6

While the Comey book contains far less bashing of Trump than has been reported, he does in fact call a spade a spade. Which means something far different than The Donald calling a spade a spade. Comey's account makes it crystal clear that he does not believe our president is fit to be our president, and not just strictly on moral grounds. In this, he is far from alone.

## **A LOT OF BURG**

My brother Dan and I were recently together in Pittsburgh for our annual pancreas look-sees at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, following which we took in a Pirates game against the Reds at PNC Park that night. Love that ballpark. Even a computer geek FN 7 like Dan appreciates the beauty of this lovely green cathedral, in spite of possibly not knowing the difference between a walk and a balk.

The following morning, we finally executed on our much-talked about plan one day to follow-up Pittsburgh with a visit to Gettysburg, and so we drove across south central Pennsylvania until we reached that historic, quaint and quite aesthetically pleasing little village. While I personally wanted to rent the Segways for a tour of the Gettysburg battlefields, they were unfortunately sold out that day, and so we instead bought a three-CD set to use in the car for a self-guided tour, involving stops at eighteen famous battle sites or other important venues. The narrators on the CDs do an amazing job of describing the three-day battle at Gettysburg between the Blues and the Grays, as the federal troops from the North attempted to fend off and defeat the invasion by Robert E. Lee and his Army of the Confederacy. So much to take in during a three-hour tour, I have every intention of going back next year or the next to do the whole thing over again. Heck, I'd be up for playing the role of a reenactor at one of their future reenactment extravaganzas. FN 8 Maybe a future Hot Stove League Trip activity? Think about it.

The last "burg" in our journey was *Harrisburg*, capital of the Keystone State, and more importantly, home of the Harrisburg Senators. Somehow, I was able to cajole Dan into attending yet a second professional baseball game with me, as we saw the hometown Senators do battle with the visiting Richmond Flying Squirrels. FNB Field, where they play,

is located on an island in the Susquehanna River, so that you are required to walk or drive across a bridge to get to it. Pretty cool venue, and one more for the list.



\* \* \* \* \*

Here's wishing all of my Hot Stove League brethren a happy, fun, and safe Independence Day holiday.

As you were.

Skipper

FN 1 When we were building our new house, I thought that I was so smart and hip by allowing our builder to talk me into including a Control Four Home Entertainment System as part of our package, with the promise of access to 173,000 TV channels, every movie ever made in English, Spanish, French, German, Dutch and Senegalese, movie-theater quality sound, a DVD player, access to every song ever recorded in every room of the house, including the furnace room, and a built-in feature which would automatically close all the house shades whenever it detected Itchie staring down at us from his Hubbell telescope on his back deck. I mean, it sounded good. Unfortunately, I count myself lucky if I'm able to master the on-off and volume up/volume down controls, for fear of making a false move and either: (1) locking up the entire system until we can get Creeper Bill from Control Four over to perform yet another magical but not complimentary reboot; or (2) launching an IBM toward Jong Un.

FN 2 I haven't been to the Pinewood Bowl for a show since I was a kid, when my parents took Kathi and Dan and me, kicking and screaming, to watch *The Music Man* or *Mary Poppins* put on by some rinky dink troupe. I was supposed to go to the Joe Bonamassa concert this past fall, but they moved it to the Pinnacle because of a bad storm. There was no storm last Friday, just beautiful weather, great music and ample libation outlets.

FN 3 Which we will get to hear again on Saturday at Target Field in Minneapolis where Michele and the four Ernst kids and I will be adorned in Parrot Head gear and rocking to all of the hits of Jimmy Buffett and the Eagles. I'll let you know if Jimmy found his lost shaker of salt.

FN 4 Possibly I have coined a new oxymoron.

FN 5 Dick Cheney.

FN 6 Hmm. I wonder if Stretch has ever considered calling his UNL law school classmates to clear up that little misunderstanding about him being the starting center for the '79-'80 Jayhawks? The Huskers had Nate Branch, and the Jayhawks had "Branch" Blongewicz.

FN 7 I use this only as a Term of Endearment. Dan proudly holds himself out as a computer *geek*, as he should.

FN 8 As long as I get to do it on a Segway, that is.