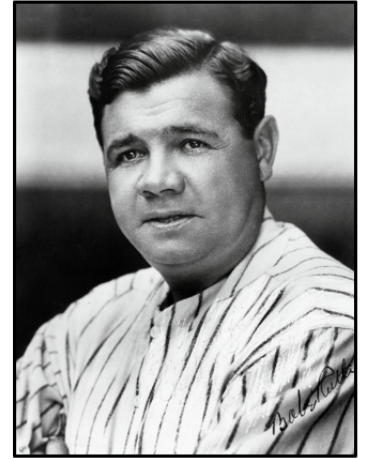




Babe Ruth

7-time World Series Champion
Career Batting Average: .342
Career Home Runs: 714
Career Pitching Record: 94-46
Career ERA: 2.28
1st in All-Time slugging percentage: .690
1st in All-Time OPS: 1.164



2019 Campaign

Edition No. 13

June 13, 2019

Brothers:

The **HSL Trip XXXV** was an event for the ages. Best trip ever. Heartfelt thanks to Brothers Blongewicz, Bridges, Drews, Krause, Morris and Pirnie, and to my biological brother Dan, for taking the time to participate in our three-day extravaganza in Arlington, and to pay homage to the Ballpark in Arlington¹ in its final season as the home stadium of the Texas Rangers. You all have busy lives and lots of other work² and family obligations to schedule around, and so for all of you to make the sacrifice and attend The Trip, you are applauded and warmly thanked. It is truly a great tradition that needs to be carried on.

Since Brother Itchie picked his own family over his baseball family and blew us off for his nephew's wedding³, he won't be able to provide us with his usual thorough recap of The Trip, so I will endeavor to do it some justice.

¹ As it was once named, until those robber barons at Globe Life shelled out whatever it took to plaster their name on it.

² Okay, well most of you.

³ Of course, the alcohol at the reception was limitless and free, and this no doubt figured prominently into Foster's calculus.

GAME ONE - FRIDAY NIGHT

After arriving in Arlington (Mouse, PAwesome, Tricko and Sunny⁴ by plane, B.T., Big Guy and Skipper by Mobile Outhouse ("MO"), and Brother Dan by car), we checked into the commodious and convenient Arlington Hilton, less than a mile from the ballpark. After wetting our whistles at our hotel bar, we traveled in style to the ballpark in MO, where parking experts at Globe Life quickly identified us as "Green Lot" people and ushered us into a Rock Star stall. So far so good.

Recorded below for posterity is a pic of the Magnificent Seven in front of The Ballpark in Arlington, our first sanctioned HSL visit to this absolute jewel of a ballpark.



⁴Just to keep things fresh, we are going to try out a new handle for McBlunder, owing to his newly cheerful disposition, as noticed by all. It was a toss-up between the Sunshine Optimist and Sunnyside Up, so I think we'll just compromise and hereinafter refer to him as "Sunny."

Once inside the ballpark and past the metal detectors, Sunny informed us that while he had purchased excellent seats for all of us in Section 18, Rows 24 and 25,⁵ the high tech snobs at StubHub made it impossible for him to print off individual tickets for each of us: as such, we would have to huddle together like hobos around a campfire so that he could flash the bar codes at the ticket taker for each of us, and gain entrance for our group *en masse*. In the past, this sort of logistical roadblock might very well have chapped Sunny's ass so brightly red that he may have fired off an expletive or two directed at the ticket taker individual, or perhaps to the world at large, but the new and improved--some might say Zenlike--Sunny shrugged this little glitch off like a pesky gnat.

Once inside the ballpark, adult refreshments were purchased for the start of the game, and we made our way to our most excellent seats in Section 18, practically spitting distance from the Rangers' third base dugout. On a beautiful June night, with a nice breeze mediating the 90-degree-plus temperature, it was a great night to be at the ballpark with the HSL Band of Brothers. In a competitive match, we saw the Oakland A's prevail over the hometown Rangers by a score of 5-3, with the Rangers putting runners on 1st and 3rd in the bottom of the 9th and then coming up just short when Elvis Andrus grounded into a double play, third to second to first. The starting pitchers for the game were Brett Anderson for the A's and Lance Lynn for the Rangers, and the winning pitcher for Oakland was Yusmeiro Petit, with Jose Leclerc taking the loss. Blake Treinen recorded a save for the A's. Marcus Semien--Tirebiter's star shortstop--muscled up a pair of home runs for the Athletics, knocking in 4 of their 5 runs.

AND THEN IT HAPPENED

After the game, we returned to our hotel in MO, and bellied back up to the bar for a nightcap or two. Or so we thought.

Our friendly waiter, a young fella who may have been on his virgin assignment, took our drink orders and efficiently filled them to the pleasure of the Magnificent Seven. More lively baseball chatter ensued, and as the libations flowed we even opened up the floor to questions about other and more personal aspects of our lives. In retrospect, this may have been a mistake, as the conversation was from that point on dominated by a discussion about all of our various surgeries, transplants, procedures, diagnoses, medications,

⁵ And indeed, they were excellent seats. Well done, Sunny.

and other related topics never discussed in our salad days, when we were young and green. We heard about Magpie's two new hips, about Big Guy's faulty plumbing, about Skipper's Dr. Frankenstein forearm scar, about B.T.'s acute low back, clogged coronary artery and, well, you get the picture. As a group, we are the Poster Children for the American Medical Association, and prime donors to the Physicians Annuity Fund.

On the other hand, PAwesome, Mouse and Sunny were not heard to voice any complaints about their deteriorating mortal coils, but then in some people, the truth is self-evident. As for Sunny, he is 20 pounds lighter, nearly svelte, and threatening to eliminate entirely the bowling ball that he once carried around his middle with such pride and authority.

As our lively discourse continued into the evening, our young waitstaffer was summoned over for orders for another round of drinks, at right about 2 minutes before midnight. After taking our orders and then walking back to the bar to have them filled, he quickly returned and informed us that the bar had closed at midnight and that there would be *no more alcohol* for the Magnificent Seven. The reaction that this statement drew from the usually amiable and placid B.T. was shocking and alarming. Sputtered B.T.: **"Are you kidding me? What happened to last call? Are you kidding me? Some of us need more alcohol!"** Hide the women and children, this man⁶ was p-i-ssed.

Apparently realizing that his temper tantrum tirade was not going to produce another round of drinks, B.T. eventually calmed himself down⁷ and apologized to our scared-stiff waiter, as well as to his scared-stiff and concerned HSL compatriots. Our fun suddenly over for the night, we bid our farewells and repaired to our respective rooms for the evening. It's unclear exactly what happened next, but the speculation is that B.T. made a secretive phone call from his room to his AA sponsor⁸, only to learn that Foster would be of no avail to B.T. that particular evening, having drunk himself silly at his nephew's Prenuptial Dinner and passed out with his face in the mashed potatoes⁹. Ahhh, what a great start to The Trip.

⁶ We learned later on in the Trip that B.T. recently discovered from a 23 and Me test that he is 1/4 Flathead Indian, and suddenly then his explosive outburst made sense. Him wanted--needed--more Firewater. Him angry.

⁷ Possibly through another form of medication.

⁸ Itchie.

⁹ And then soiling himself.^A

^A And then having an anvil drop on his head.

SATURDAY

Day Two of The Trip began with the lads¹⁰ meeting up in the lobby, who then locked arms and went into the hotel restaurant as one, determined to horn in on B.T.'s Hilton Owner's Meal Ticket. Ownership does have its privileges. Our lovely waitress Magda, a native of Poland¹¹, steered us toward the buffet and did her level best to sell us on omelets and pancakes, apparently working on commission. Mission accomplished. Please charge it to our friend, Saturn Award Nominee Sir ShoutsALot.¹²

AND THEN A SCRAPBOOKING CONVENTION BROKE OUT

After stuffing our pieholes as encouraged by Magda, we piled back into MO to head over to the ballpark for the 1:00 p.m. Saturday afternoon game. We assumed that we would be able to utilize the same Rock Star parking we were accorded a day earlier, but it was not to be. Skirting around the unambiguous "No Parking" sign to pull up to the ticket booth, our driver, the newly tempestuous B.T., was informed that there was a *scrapbooking* convention going on close by, and that our parking lot had been usurped for use by the Scrapbooking Ladies Alliance, and hence not available for our MO. **"Are you flipping kidding me?"** blared an apoplectic B.T. And then, **"We need that parking spot, Mac, and we need it right now!"**

Unfortunately, in spite of B.T.'s outright belligerence, the ticket taker wouldn't budge, and we had to find an alternative parking spot¹³. As his colleagues attempted to smooth his ruffled Flathead feathers, B.T. muttered under his breath something about exacting revenge against the Scrapbooking Community, no matter how long it might take.

GAME TWO

Thanks to PAwesome, we once again had excellent seats on Saturday afternoon to catch our second game of the Rangers-Athletics series. Trouble was, the seats were wholly

¹⁰ Sans Dan, who had seen enough, and Mouse, who had to get up at the crack of dawn for a flight to New York City to be with his daughter on her birthday. A trooper's trooper, that one.

¹¹ Who immediately took a shine to Sunny, our walking Czech Festival.

¹² Who the rest of us feared might soon lay into Magda with a belligerent burst such as, **"What? You're out of Hollandaise sauce for my eggs? Are you kidding me? Some of us need Hollandaise sauce!"** Fortunately, there was plenty of Hollandaise sauce, and our Tempest in a Teapot kept his cool all breakfast long. Fingers crossed.

¹³ Not a "Green Lot" to be found that day.

exposed to the sun on a 92-degree, high humidity day, so just about the time that the game began, the rest of us moved back about 15 rows to some empty seats in the shade. While the rest of us enjoyed the game in relative comfort, with a cool breeze from the concourse refreshing us from time to time, PAwesome, being PAwesome, elected to watch the great majority of the game from his fully sun-exposed seat. There were several veiled references by him to our diminished manhood for refusing to sit and roast in the sun with him, as well as several not-so-veiled catcalls about the rest of us being "pussies." Notwithstanding these unfounded challenges, the balance of our HSL contingency remained in the shade and were happy to avoid heat stroke.¹⁴

The Rangers won the afternoon game by the score of 10-5. Hitting highlights included home runs by Nomar Mazara and reserve catcher Tim Federowicz (no relation to Sunny), who both drove in 3 runs; a 3-for-5 day by Elvis Andrus, including 2 doubles; and 2 hits and 2 RBIs by Asdrúbal Cabrera. For the Athletics, Matt Olson went deep off Rangers starter Joe Palumbo in the 4th inning with one runner aboard, and Josh Phegley, riding pine on the Tigers' bench, went deep off Rangers reliever Jeffrey Springs in the 7th inning, to go along with his double off Palumbo, knocking in 3 runs for the day. The winning pitcher for the Rangers was Jeffrey Springs, whose record was elevated to 4-and-1, while Paul Blackburn took the loss for the Athletics.

After the game, it was back to MO and then back to the hotel to cool off and clean up for dinner and the second ballgame of the day. Sunny¹⁵ appointed Magpie with the task of finding a suitable place for a group dinner, and after an efficient bit of internet research, we were provided with two options, a barbecue joint by the name of Eddie Deen's or a steakhouse called Sawgrass, with Sawgrass being the leading contender. Although PAwesome lobbied long, loud and hard for the barbecue joint, in the end the decision was made to go to the steakhouse.

DINNER AT SAWGRASS

After securing our table at Sawgrass for the Splendid Six, we ordered tasty libations and engaged in delightful palaver. The mood for the dinner conversation was quickly set when

¹⁴ PAwesome wasn't so lucky. But it does offer a possible explanation for his subsequent manic behavior.

¹⁵ Not sure who put him in charge.

Big Guy launched into one of his lengthy stories and, impatient to be heard himself, B.T. interrupted Big Guy's stemwinder with the terse caution that, "*This better be a good story!*" Wow, no pressure there, Big Guy.

In any event, as Big Guy eventually finished his tale, we then began examining the menu, which was replete with outstanding options. When our waiter asked B.T. for his selection, our beloved but prickly comrade asked the waiter if his steak selection could be garnished with sautéed mushrooms and onions. When it appeared the waiter was going to respond to this inquiry in the negative, several other league members frantically gestured to him that it would be best for him to say yes to this, which he did, narrowly averting another eruption¹⁶ from our league Mount Vesuvius.

But enough about B.T.¹⁷ As our waiter at Sawgrass continued to take our orders, PAwesome, in a clear gesture of friendship and a sincere desire for a shared experience, indicated what he was about to order and then suggested to Sunny that they share the dish being ordered by PAwesome, and that Sunny order a different dish for the two of them to share as well. Sunny's curt response: "No, I'm not doing that." While PAwesome was a bit hurt at the perceived rebuff, he shouldn't have been. Our Man Sunny was merely drawing a sharp line so that there would be no misunderstanding. The new Jon.

In summation, we were all delighted with our delicious repast at Sawgrass, as the spirit of conviviality continued on.

ALL ABOUT ADRIÁN

After dinner, we returned to The Ballpark in Arlington in time for the retirement party for Adrián Bértre, No. 29. It was quite a production, including live tributes from a befuddled-looking 91-year-old Tommy Lasorda,¹⁸ Elvis Andrus and Raul Ibanez; and video tributes from such baseball luminaries as Nolan Ryan, Mike Schmidt and George Brett; from Pedro Martinez and Albert Pujols to Derek Jeter and David Ortiz. Then came the Hall of Fame third basemen: George Brett, Mike Schmidt and Chipper Jones. All said they would be saving a seat for Bértre in Cooperstown in five years. It is clear that they love Bértre in Arlington, as the celebration included multiple standing ovations. Several of Bértre's Hall

¹⁶ As in, "**Are you kidding me? I can't have any mushrooms on my steak? I need mushrooms on my steak, can't you understand that?**"

¹⁷ At least for now. Or as folks in Arlington are now referring to him, **BlowTop**.

¹⁸ Who managed Adrián in his ML debut with the Dodgers in 1998.

of Fame-caliber milestones were reached while he was wearing a Rangers uniform, and his career marks¹⁹ are the stuff of first ballot Hall of Famers, and so there is little doubt that B ltre will be enshrined at Cooperstown just as soon as he is eligible.

He's no Pie Traynor, but B ltre did play the game with *joie de vivre*. It was good to play a small part in his retirement celebration.

GAME THREE

The third and final game which we witnessed in Arlington was another Ranger win over the Athletics, this time by the score of 3-1. Adrian Sampson pitched a 4-hit complete game gem for the Rangers and nabbed the win, notching 40 points for his savvy owner, Sunny. Shamu's pitcher Chris Bassitt absorbed the loss, going 5-2/3 innings and narrowly missing a Quality Start.²⁰ Other highlights of the game included a home run by Mark Canha off Sampson in the 4th inning, temporarily putting the Athletics on top, until the Rangers broke up Bassitt's no-hitter with one out in the fifth, with back-to-back-to-back singles, a beaming of Choo to load the bases, and a sacrifice fly by Deshields to put the Rangers ahead for good.

SHAMU GONE BAD

Naturally, we encountered a host of Shamu lookalikes on the Trip, about which Shamu would later text²¹ inquire, to his everlasting regret. On this particular Trip, however, we were lucky enough to have Faux Shamu seated just two spots away from Big Guy at the Saturday night game. Here he is, in all his glory:

¹⁹ 2933 games played, 1524 R, 3166 H, 636 2B, 477 HR, 1707 RBI, 121 SB, 848 BB, and a career BA of .286. Wow.

²⁰ In fact, he was one strike away from a Quality Start before Rougned Odor fouled off several pitches to stay alive, and then finally earned a walk, paving the way for the next Ranger hitter (Danny Santana) to rap out a triple and chase Bassitt from the game. Sorry, Shamu. Pass the hydrocodone, please!

²¹ Shamu: Great Picture! Is the short guy in red my lookalike?
Skip: Nope. Here he is.



Sir Charles Gone Bad (if he had never met Jan).

AFTERMATH

After saying our goodbyes to Globe Life Park, our merry little band returned to the scene of the crime from one night earlier, our hotel bar, and immediately issued a stern warning to our waiter²² to be sure and announce "Last Call" so that we could all be sufficiently plied with liquor for the evening. It worked.

As we bid each other good evening, we discussed the breakfast and travel plans for Sunday morning, and Sunny boldly announced that, "I won't be getting up early to see you off," letting us all know exactly where we all stood. Again, straight talk, clear lines drawn. Love you, too, Sunny.

AND FINALLY, SUNDAY

The final day of our trip began with a hearty Hilton hotel breakfast served up by the effervescent Magda, who immediately inquired as to the whereabouts of our svelte and handsome Polish comrade. After being told that Sunnywicz was still up in his room asleep, Magda offered that "I'll bet he snores."²³

²² Who, surprisingly, did not turn in his resignation after being lambasted by **BlowTorch** (B.T.) the night before.

²³ Not really, but it's a good story.

After breakfast, Magpie and PAwesome headed to the airport for their flight home, while B.T., Big Guy and Skipper piled back into MO for the 10-hour drive home. As expected, there was much lively conversation on the return ride, covering such wide-ranging²⁴ topics as Jack Ernst's poetry²⁵; Shamu's Trial Advocacy class misadventures; North Korea; Iran; Trump; Will's plan to vote for Bernie Sanders²⁶; and various and sundry other topics.

THE END

As our HSL contingency said our respective goodbyes to the gem of a ballpark now known as Globe Life Field, B.T. and I reminisced about our first visit to the Ballpark in Arlington for Opening Day of 1995, featuring hometown hero Van Cliburn tickling the ivories with style and grace. Here is a picture from that visit a quarter of a century ago:

²⁴ But not "feelings." Never.

²⁵ MY BUDDY

I miss my Buddy,
Although his doggie feet were muddy.
He came to me one warm humid night
And lay softly on the ground by our grill.
Oh, I remember him still.
His soft brown eyes followed my every movement.
His sensitive nose often nestled on my lower garment.
But he left, someplace in Minnesota, a cooler climate.
Leaving me alone to sing "Oh where has my little dog
gone" lament.
Oh, I miss my Buddy,
And my wife making me give him up was *cruddy*.

²⁶ Including B.T.'s volcanic reaction to learning this: **"What? Will's voting for Bernie Sanders? You've got to be kidding me! I need for him to vote for anyone *other* than a damned socialist!"**



I know what you're thinking--Skipper really hasn't changed a bit but man, B.T. has got some heavy mileage on him. City miles. Whew.

Anyway, it was one heckuva ballpark, and one heckuva trip. Thanks once more to the Band of Brothers who made 2019's junket the Best Trip Ever!

OH, YEAH, THE STANDINGS

Here are the standings through Week 11 ending June 9, 2019:

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 11 ENDING JUNE 9, 2019

1	Wahoos	5492.9	-
2	Redbirds	5432.8	60.1
3	Bums	5268.3	224.6
4	Senators	5132.6	360.3
5	Skipjacks	4938.1	554.8
6	Tigers	4856.9	636.0
7	Monarchs	4830.9	662.0
8	Tribe	4806.3	686.6
9	Bombers	4714.0	778.9

10	Chiefs	4651.6	841.3
11	Bears	4636.0	856.9
12	Cubs	4612.0	880.9
13	Blues	4203.8	1289.1

And here are the point totals for Week 11.

**POINTS FOR WEEK 11
ENDING JUNE 9, 2019**

1	Redbirds	565.8
2	Skipjacks	528.8
3	Monarchs	525.0
4	Cubs	481.0
5	Chiefs	463.5
6	Senators	460.6
7	Wahoos	458.5
8	Tigers	436.1
9	Bums	422.4
10	Bombers	401.6
11	Blues	370.0
12	Bears	362.8
13	Tribe	323.4

MORE PICTURES



Tommy's Look of Confusion Rings Familiar to the HSLers.



A Paeon to Adrián.



Tricko Continues to Manage PAwesome
and Feign Interest.



Sunny Has a Cow Over the Dancing Bovines.



The Calm Before the Storm.



PAwesome Admires the Fact that Big Guy Can Even Walk on His Trick Knee.



Sunnyside Up -- Yin and Yang in Perfect Balance.



B.T. Attacks His Ice Cream Cone More Viciously Even Than Our Friday Night Drink Server.



The Magnificent Seven with Brother Dan.



Sunny's Thought Bubble: (Hmm. Wonder how much they would pay me for a nude belly flop into the pond?)



Sunny Patiently Waits for His Colleagues So He Can Scan Them into The Game.



"Hey, BlowTop. Can I drive?"
(Nooooooooooooo!)

Truly yours,
Skipper