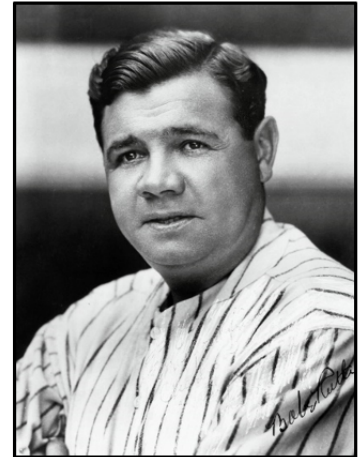




Babe Ruth

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. 15

July 3, 2019

WEEK 14: REDBIRDS CLING TO LEAD; SENATORS RIDE RISING TIDE

Brethren:

Through 14 weeks of play, or a little more than half of the 2019 Hot Stove League season, Jim Ed's **Redbirds** are still leading the pack with 6895.7 points, narrowly ahead of the second-place **Wahoos** with 6869.0. Even with the second-lowest point total for Week 14 (385.6 points, ahead of the trailing **Blues**' uninspired total of 354.8 points), the **Crimson Chirpers** remain atop the heap.

For the first time in about a decade, it seems, the **Senators** led the way with the highest point total for Week 14 with 548.0 points, just barely ahead of the **Wahoos**' 545.1 points, the **Monarchs**' 540.5 points, the **Skipjacks**' 535.7 points, and the **Bombers** 533.8 points. In other words, a lot of teams had a lot of points during Week 14. A rising tide lifts all boats. Or most.

One team that didn't, however, was the **Chiefs**, who had the fourth worst total for Week 14 with 415.9 points, in spite of having a monster day last Saturday, June 29, with 173.6 points, one of the top-scoring daily performances of the 2019 Hot Stove League season. However, this gargantuan output by the **Chiefs** was practically bookended by team totals of 11.2 points on Sunday, the 30th, and 1.1 (ouch) points on June 27. This is definitely the *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* team of the season.

In terms of individual performances for Week 14, the **Monarchs** had the hottest hitter of the week in DJ LeMahieu with 61.0 points, while the **Wahoos** had the hottest pitcher of the week in Max Scherzer with 85.0 points. The **Tribe** had the least hot pitcher of the week in Aarón Sánchez , who moonwalked to the tune of -21, while Mike Clevinger of the **Monarchs** skipped backwards 17 paces and Rick Porcello of the **Wahoos** backed his team up by 15 points.

On the Top 25 Pitchers' inventory, the **Chiefs**, **Tribe**, **Monarchs**, **Senators**, **Redbirds**, and **Bums** all have 3 pitchers on the listicle. At the other end of the spectrum, the **Bears**, **Blues** and **Tigers** all have nary a single pitcher in the Top 25.

On the Top 25 Hitters' register, the **Monarchs** have 4 players on said docket (Mike Trout, Freddie Freeman, DJ LeMahieu and Max Muncy), followed by the **Blues** and **Bears** with 3 apiece. At the other end, the **Chiefs** do not have a single hitter in the Top 25.

**STANDINGS THRU WEEK 14
ENDING JUNE 30, 2019**

1	Redbirds	6895.7	-
2	Wahoos	6869.0	26.7
3	Bums	6750.1	145.6
4	Senators	6650.4	245.3
5	Monarchs	6582.7	313.0
6	Skipjacks	6494.2	401.5
7	Bombers	6238.7	657.0
8	Chiefs	6211.4	684.3
9	Tigers	6199.3	696.4
10	Tribe	6030.8	864.9
11	Bears	5998.5	897.2
12	Cubs	5936.9	958.8
13	Blues	5551.7	1344.0

**POINTS FOR WEEK 14
ENDING JUNE 30, 2019**

1	Senators	548.0
2	Wahoos	545.1
3	Monarchs	540.5
4	Skipjacks	535.7
5	Bombers	533.8
6	Bums	502.1
7	Tigers	460.6
8	Bears	440.4
9	Tribe	416.4
10	Chiefs	415.9
11	Cubs	413.0

12	Redbirds	385.6
13	Blues	354.8

TOP 25 PITCHERS

1.	Justin Verlander	Bums	488.0
2.	Max Scherzer	Wahoos	485.0
3.	Gerrit Cole	Senators	424.0
4.	Zack Greinke	Chiefs	409.0
5.	Hyun-Jin Ryu	Cubs	407.0
6.	Mike Minor	Bums	383.0
7.	Charlie Morton	Redbirds	381.0
8.	Lucas Giolito	Tribe	375.0
9.	José Berrios	Monarchs	374.0
10.	Shane Bieber	Senators	372.0
11.	Stephen Strasburg	Bombers	360.0
12.	Trevor Bauer	Tribe	355.0
13.	Lance Lynn	Bums	353.0
	Luis Castillo	Monarchs	353.0
15.	Brandon Woodruff	Redbirds	350.0
16.	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	344.0
17.	Jacob deGrom	Skipjacks	336.0
18.	Matthew Boyd	Wahoos	327.0
19.	Chris Sale	Chiefs	325.0
20.	Mike Soroka	Redbirds	322.0
21.	Jake Odorizzi	Bombers	316.0
	Patrick Corbin	Senators	316.0
23.	Cole Hamels	Monarchs	315.0
24.	German Márquez	Tribe	314.0
25.	Jon Gray	Chiefs	310.0

WHO'S HOT -- PITCHERS

1.	Max Scherzer	Wahoos	85.0
2.	Madison Bumgarner	Bombers	69.0
3.	Gerrit Cole	Senators	59.0
4.	Jon Gray	Chiefs	58.0
5.	Shane Bieber	Senators	56.0
6.	Jesse Chávez	Bombers	50.0
7.	Zack Greinke	Chiefs	45.0
8.	Lance Lynn	Bums	43.0
9.	Jon Lester	Tigers	40.0
10.	Trevor Bauer	Tribe	39.0
11.	Mike Minor	Bums	38.0
12.	Patrick Corbin	Senators	37.0

13.	Lucas Giolito	Tribe	36.0
	Andrew Cashner	Skipjacks	36.0
	Max Fried	Skipjacks	36.0
	Aaron Nola	Wahoos	36.0
17.	Brett Anderson	Tigers	35.0
18.	Chris Paddack	Wahoos	34.0
	Brandon Woodruff	Redbirds	34.0
20.	Brendan McKay	Monarchs	32.0
21.	Anthony DeSclafani	Skipjacks	32.0
	Michael Pineda	Chiefs	32.0
23.	Ariel Jurado	Blues	31.0
24.	Aníbal Sánchez	Skipjacks	30.0
	Drew Pomeranz	Cubs	30.0

WHO'S NOT -- PITCHERS

1.	Aaron Sanchez	Tribe	-21.0
2.	Mike Clevinger	Monarchs	-17.0
3.	Rick Porcello	Wahoos	-15.0
4.	Masahiro Tanaka	Redbirds	-14.0
5.	Brad Peacock	Chiefs	-11.0
	Zach Plesac	Blues	-11.0
	Steven Matz	Tribe	-11.0
8.	Hyun-Jin Ryu	Cubs	-10.0
	Julio Teheran	Bums	-10.0
10.	Dakota Hudson	Redbirds	-9.0
11.	Jack Flaherty	Bears	-7.0
12.	James Paxton	Bombers	-6.0
13.	Dylan Bundy	Redbirds	-5.0
	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	-5.0
	Adrian Houser	Bears	-5.0
16.	Trent Thornton	Bears	-3.0
	Cole Hamels	Monarchs	-3.0
	Sandy Alcantara	Chiefs	-3.0
	Trevor Richards	Tribe	-3.0

TOP 25 HITTERS

1.	Cody Bellinger	Bombers	452.7
2.	Christian Yelich	Redbirds	443.5
3.	Mike Trout	Monarchs	417.8
4.	Freddie Freeman	Monarchs	410.2
5.	Nolan Arenado	Blues	393.8
6.	Josh Bell	Chiefs	391.8
7.	Pete Alonso	Tribe	384.7

8.	Xander Bogaerts	Senators	376.4
9.	Charlie Blackmon	Skipjacks	376.2
10.	Alex Bregman	Bears	369.3
11.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Redbirds	365.4
12.	DJ LeMahieu	Monarchs	365.1
13.	Ketel Marte	Skipjacks	361.6
14.	Anthony Rendon	Cubs	360.8
15.	Eduardo Escobar	Wahoos	358.0
16.	Matt Chapman	Bums	353.4
17.	Trevor Story	Wahoos	351.4
18.	Carlos Santana	Blues	348.8
19.	Kris Bryant	Tigers	345.0
20.	Max Muncy	Monarchs	341.0
21.	Anthony Rizzo	Bears	340.5
22.	Rhys Hoskins	Tribe	340.3
23.	Rafael Devers	Blues	334.7
24.	Javier Báez	Bears	332.6
25.	Jorge Polanco	Senators	332.3

WHO'S HOT -- HITTERS

1.	DJ LeMahieu	Monarchs	61.0
2.	Lourdes Gurriel Jr.	Senators	52.1
3.	Jason Heyward	Tribe	50.1
4.	Charlie Blackmon	Skipjacks	49.0
5.	Fernando Tatis Jr.	Tribe	47.3
6.	Maikel Franco	Chiefs	46.7
7.	Nelson Cruz	Cubs	46.5
	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Redbirds	46.5
9.	David Dahl	Bears	44.6
10.	Eric Hosmer	Blues	43.7
11.	Matt Chapman	Bums	43.0
12.	Dominic Smith	Bombers	41.6
13.	Jeff McNeil	Chiefs	40.9
14.	Kevin Newman	Monarchs	40.7
15.	Shohei Ohtani (Batter)	Monarchs	40.5
16.	Didi Gregorius	Monarchs	39.3
17.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	38.9
18.	Max Muncy	Monarchs	38.8
19.	Jean Segura	Skipjacks	38.2
20.	Manny Machado	Monarchs	37.0
21.	J.D. Martinez	Bums	36.5
	Joey Gallo	Tribe	36.5
	Aaron Judge	Tigers	36.5
24.	Alex Verdugo	Monarchs	36.1

25.	Rafael Devers	Blues	35.7
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WHO'S NOT -- HITTERS

1.	Teoscar Hernández	Cubs	-5.5
2.	Bobby Bradley	Senators	-2.0
3.	Marwin Gonzalez	Wahoos	-1.8
4.	Derek Dietrich	Wahoos	-1.0
5.	Scooter Gennett	Senators	-0.9
6.	Jesse Winker	Chiefs	-0.5
7.	Avisail García	Bums	-0.4

GET OVER YOURSELF, BIG GUY

In his recently-circulated birdcage liner called "How I Remember It,"¹ Brother Grimm concocted a **fairy tale** for the ages, long on meaningless drivel but short on actual substance. Well, not short--*devoid*. If Barrister Drews were ever to try to submit such a house of cards defense in an actual judicial forum, he would be (1) laughed out of the courtroom; (2) fined for frivolous behavior; (3) jailed for suborning perjury; and then (4) have an anvil dropped on his head by Rusty the Bailiff. While Barrister Drews has produced a gossamer-thin case that would make even James Martin Davis blush, and which truly requires no response, allow me to make a few comments about his so-called case which just begs to be disemboweled.

For starters, *poppycock*. Secondly, *balderdash*. Thirdly, *horsefeathers*. Fourth, *rubbish*. In the *My Cousin Vinny* vernacular, everything that Big Guy just said is "bullshit." As Marissa Tomei might say, "It doesn't hold water."

Put another way, as in the old Burger King commercials, "Where's the beef?" Where's the proof? Where are the facts? If there was supposedly a vehicular accident somewhere along the Canadian Carnage Alley, or whatever he called it, *where* did it happen, and *what* exactly happened? Did a semitruck cross the median and slam into vehicles on the other side of the median? Were there explosions involved? Flames? Were there ambulances present? How about police cars? What about fire trucks? Certainly, if Kreskin and his "memory imprint" extra sensory perception was able to record memories of an "undeveloped area with grass fields on the side of the road," he would also have been able to lay down some memory tracks about the details of the accident. I mean, at some point after Blow Top passed the last of the vehicles in line because of this horrible, unspeakable accident on Ontario Highway 401, somebody in our van must have caught a glimpse of just what it was that led to B.T.'s heroic driving adventure. And for an accident to cause that sort of a backup, there must be some recordation of it in the Canadian newspapers.

¹ Snappy title. Not too different from his highly-acclaimed essay from fourth grade English class, "What I Did on My Summer Vacation."

Instead, we get a bald mention about an 87-vehicle pileup on September of 1999, some 7 years later. Hello. Where is any article from 1992 to counter my article from 1992, when the accident supposedly actually happened?

By way of contrast, because I was so sure that we were stacked up in line because of construction that was going on east of Cleveland on Interstate 90, I specifically requested that my internet researcher search the newspapers of Cleveland for early 1992, because I absolutely knew that there would be something in the paper about construction along Interstate 90. And there was. And you've seen it. And it clearly shows that there was construction going on east of Cleveland on Interstate 90 which would likely occasion delays, just the sort of delay that we were experiencing until Blow Top took matters into his own hands.

So enough about the circular file-worthy minifesto generated by Big Guy to try to support his flawed memory. Let's move on to the why.

HE CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH



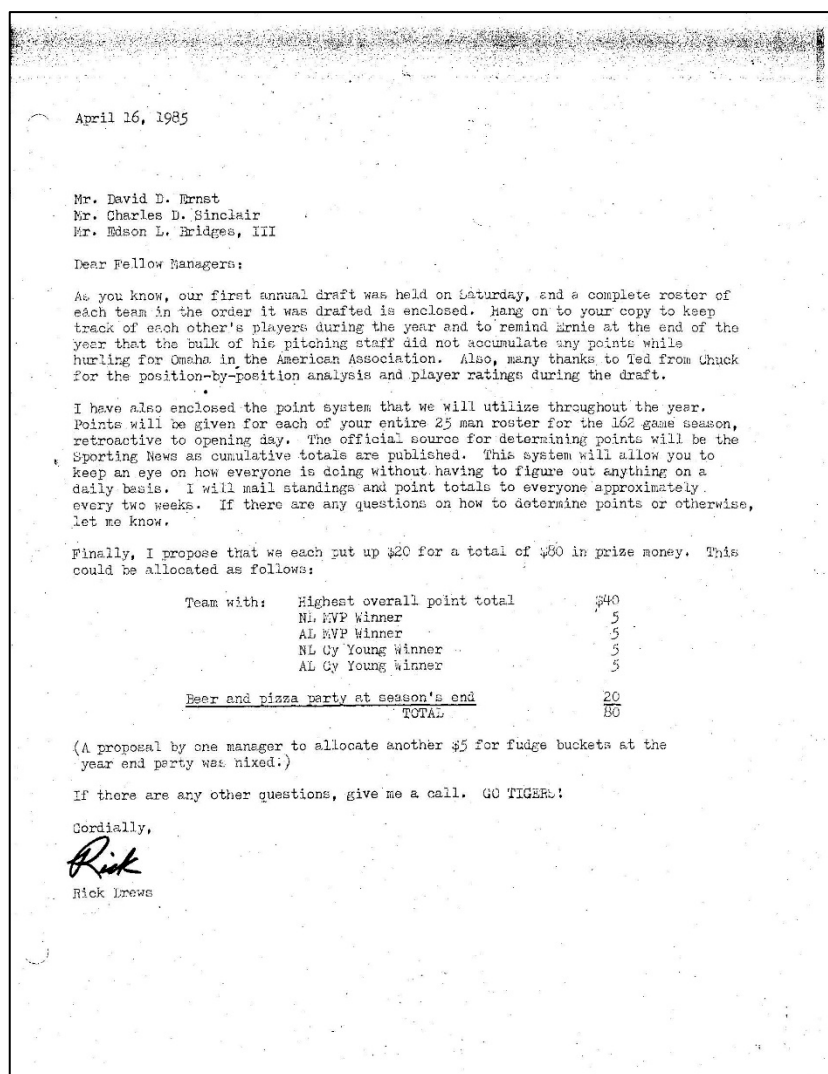
Why, you might ask, doth Barrister Drews protest so much, particularly in light of the crystal clear evidence that the Van Shoulder Episode occurred in the Buckeye State, and not in the foreign land of LaBatt's beer and Tim Horton franchises? It's simple, really, and any dime store psychologist could put his finger right on the answer. Because Big Guy prides himself so much on his (as he believes) infallible memory, he cannot admit to himself--forget about anyone else--that he just might be wrong on this one, that his magical "mental imprint" power might be suffering from a power outage on this one particular point. Because if he's wrong about this one,² he could be wrong about other things, such as the location of the original Hot Stove League Draft in April of 1985. And while I'm on that point, please allow this important digression to cover another significant *mis-remember* by our beloved Commissioner:³

² He is.

³ With all due respect.

THOU SHALT NOT TRESPASS

While in transit to and from Arlington in Blow Top's Mobile Outhouse, we of course revisited the very important topic of the situs of the initial Hot Stove League Draft in 1985, attended by Big Guy, Shamu and Skipper. We appear to be in full agreement and accord that the Draft took place on April 13, 1985, because Big Guy sent out a letter (see a signed copy below) after the fact dated April 16, 1985, referring to the previous Saturday's Draft, which according to the calendar, was April 13, 1985. And we have the initial rosters Drafted by each of us, which is part of the League archives.⁴ What we don't agree on is *where* the initial Draft occurred. I think we agree that *I* was the host of the Draft, at whatever rental property I was living in at the time. I vividly recall that the Draft took place at my townhouse located at 10920 Spaulding Plaza, which was my second apartment unit after moving to Omaha in May of 1983. For the record, my first Omaha apartment was located at 10681 Hamilton Plaza, Apt. 405.



⁴ Including the roster of the championship Red Sox team drafted by yours truly for PAwe-some. You're welcome, Ted.

TEAM ROUTERS			
ROYALS	RED SOX	CUBS	TIGERS
1. Cal Ripken	Dale Murphy	Eddie Murray	Lance Parrish
2. Dave Winfield	Rick Sutcliffe	Rickey Henderson	Alan Trammell
3. Tony Pena	Dwight Evans	Hyne Landberg	Lou Whitaker
4. Keith Hernandez	Lon Nittingly	Jim Rice	Dwight Gooden
5. George Brett	Mike Schmidt	Wane Dogge	Willie Hernandez
6. Ian Glausenberry	Dickie Thon	Bruce Lutter	Tony Gwynn
7. Bud Black	Jesse Orosco	Jack Morris	Mike Boddicker
8. Kirk Gibson	Gary Carter	Tia Raines	Mario Boto
9. Dave Stieb	Laharr Hoyt	P. Valenzuela	Len Petry
10. Willie Wilson	Juan Samuel	J. Andujar	Frank Viola
11. Roger Clemens	Steve Carlton	Gary Templeton	Leon Durhan
12. Frank White	Bob Stanley	Goose Gossage	Jose' Cruz
13. Bob Horner	Mike Easler	Jody Davis	Paul Molitor
14. Mark Gubicza	Mike Witt	Steve Rogers	Bill Caudill
15. Bert Blyleven	Mike Gedman	Carlton Fisk	Tony Armas
16. Bob Brunansky	Don Kistler	Keith Moreland	George Bell
17. Terry Kennedy	Gary Gaetti	Andre Dawson	Buddy Bell
18. Steve Sax	Robin Yount	Julio Franco	D. Strawberry
19. Alfredo Griffin	Johnny Ray	Jack Clark	Willie Randolph
20. Kent Hrbek	Lennis Boyd	Bobby Grich	A. Davis
21. Lee Smith	Floyd Mannister	Don Guidry	A. Pena
22. Nolan Ryan	Bob Dozier	Harold Baines	Hubie Brooks
23. Kevin McReynolds	Chad Davis	Fabian Perez	Jack Brunty
24. Mark Langston	Bill Buckner	George Larling	A. Lopez
25. Pete Rose	Shut Lemon	Carney Lansford	Don Gladden
Gerry Anderson	Fred Lynn	Roy Smalley	Don Baylor
Greg Walker	Gary Templeton	Joe Mauer	Ozzie Virgil
Tim Lincecum	Dave Conception	Phil Mielke	Charlie Haugh
Walt Tetter	Willie McGee	Mickey Hatcher	Wade Boggs
Rob Kipper	Danny Cox	Kiko Garcia	Lloyd Moseby
	Paulie		Orel Hershiser

Many years ago, we discovered that we had differing memories of where the original Draft took place. Big Guy was then and is now convinced that it took place at my *first* apartment at 10681 Hamilton Plaza, and he was somehow able to persuade the feeble-minded and malleable Shamu that this is in fact where the historic initial HSL Draft took place.

On our Arlington HSL trip last month, Big Guy a/k/a Kreskin once again pulled out his "mental imprint" argument in support of his position, describing his distinct and infallible memory of my sparsely furnished apartment as evidence of his theory that I was about to move into my new apartment at the time of the original Draft, but hadn't yet completed the chore. Yet a new tactic. But completely wrong.

The fly in the ointment for Big Guy is that I previously produced copies of my leases at each of these two rental units, and my lease at 10681 Hamilton Plaza was **expired** well before the date of our Draft on April 13, 1985, and the lease on my second rental unit at 10920 Spaulding Plaza **was in full force and effect** at the time of the Draft. Yet even with signed documentary evidence of my leasehold premises at the time of the Draft, Big Guy refused then and refuses now to concede the point. If his theory is correct, then the

three of us were Trespassers at my previous digs, and were fortunate indeed that we were not arrested and charged.

As I've said before, now *that's* stubborn. No evidence to the contrary, but Big Guy's own "mental imprint" somehow trumps⁵ the signed and dated leases I produced which undeniably disprove his theory.

WHICH IS IT?

So I have to wonder, is Big Guy *more* sure that the Van Shoulder Episode happened on the Detroit-to-Toronto leg and not the Toronto-to-Cleveland leg, or that the original Draft took place in my first apartment unit at 10681 Hamilton Plaza, and not at 10920 Spaulding Plaza? Or is he *equally* certain of these two things?

I look forward to Big Guy's timely response on this very important question. More, less, or equal. Counselor?

End of digression.

AND THE DEFENSE CALLS: JOHN THIELEN

In light of the fact that Itchie has now cast the deciding ballot in favor of the "North-to-South" position,⁶ rumor has it that Big Guy plans to subpoena Bender to court as a hostile witness, to try to turn the tsunamic tide which is against the Detroit-to-Toronto position, and at least try to achieve a mistrial, with victory now impossible. Here's how that might play out.

Rusty the Bailiff: Mr. Thielen, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Bender: Yesh (hic), I swear. Your Honor, is it okay for me (hic) to have this little brown sack with me on the stand? I have a (hic) medical condition.

Judge Smails: Very well. Just don't count my foot wedges next time we are out on the course together. Barrister Drews, are you ready to proceed?

Barrister Drews: Yes, Your Honor. Craven Witness, please state your name.

⁵ And that's another thing that bothers me. He is a Trumper, but let's keep politics out of this..

⁶ With the bow-necked Big Guy and his weak-willed lackey acolyte (Sunny) favoring the "South-to-North" position, and Skipper and Magpie, and now Itchie, correctly and conclusively espousing the Toronto-to-Cleveland position; and with **Bilious the Tormented** (B.T.) declaring himself unfit to take either side.

Itchie: Who wants to know?

Barrister Drews: Your Honor, the witness is obviously hostile. Permission to use leading questions?

Judge Smalls: Not sure exactly what that means, but sure, go ahead.

Barrister Drews: Wretched Liar, were you or were you not a passenger in a van on June 11, 1992, heading from Detroit to Toronto for a baseball game, and then the following day, driving from Toronto to Cleveland for another baseball game?

Itchie: I were.

Barrister Drews: And, Loathsome Louse, were you or were you not under the influence of at least a dozen alcoholic beverages, blurring your vision, blunting your intellect, eviscerating your ability to cogently communicate, and making you have to pee really, really bad? Your answer, sir?

Itchie: I were drinking a lot that day, far more than stated, but since my usual swilling habits have been known to involve twice that much on said HSL junkets--I refer Counsel to a certain HSL Trip to Denver with unindicted co-conspirator Tony "One Way" Childers--no, my perception, speech and judgment were not impaired. I did have to pee really, really bad, though, yes.

Barrister Drews: And is it not true, Lowly Sot, that you were seated in the van on a bench seat directly behind your plump comrade, one Sir Charles Sinclair, a/k/a Shamu, and hence your vision severely if not entirely restricted?

Itchie: Nay. What is true, Mr. Fancy Pants Lawyer, is that my stout friend was gaily festooned that day in a gleaming white ensemble, composed of large nylon see-through mesh, through which my vantage point and vision were perfect.

Barrister Drews: But surely you will agree, Uncivilized Drunkard, that the reflection from Nurse Shamu's keenly polished footwear cast a blinding glare throughout the inside of the vehicle, did it not?

Itchie: You'll not fool me with your word games and trickery, Faux Kreskin, for as you well know Nurse Shamu's footwear so reeked of sweat and mildew that he was forcibly given leave of them, and they spent the rest of the journey tied to the rear bumper of the van. Inasmuch, the alleged glare of which you speak, Matlock, impacted my vision not at all.

Barrister Drews: And so to sum up, Vile Witness, isn't it true that you could not even see well enough on the day in question to distinguish whether the so-called Van Shoulder Episode occurred while driving from Detroit to Toronto, or, as my right honourable opponent doth propose, from Toronto to Cleveland?

*Itchie: Incorrect, McBeal. My memory of events that day is crystal clear, and my vision was perfect. As we came upon a line of bumper-to-bumper vehicles estimated at 1000 or more, dead stopped on Interstate 90 just outside Cleveland, and with concerns by all that we would be late for the Cleveland Indians game at the Mistake-on-the-Lake ballpark, I watched steely-eyed as **Brother Terror-at-the-wheel (B.T.)** cranked the steering mechanism to the right, pulling our van off the interstate proper and onto the right shoulder, where he proceeded to pass between 750 and 1000 vehicles that were stopped on the interstate, all the while to the girlish shrieks and screams from one Sunny in the rear compartment of said van. It is as clear to me now as it was that day in June of 1992. Skipper and Magpie are right, and you and Sunny are wrong. Period. The end. Any more questions, Counselor?*

Barrister Drews: You weren't wearing your glasses that day, were you, Disgusting Dipsomaniac?

Itchie: No, I weren't.

Barrister Drews: A-ha! But you're wearing glasses today, aren't you, Sir Rumpot? And if you didn't have them on while riding in the van, you certainly could not have seen everything that you just said that you saw, isn't that true, sir?

*Itchie: Them's **reading** glasses.*

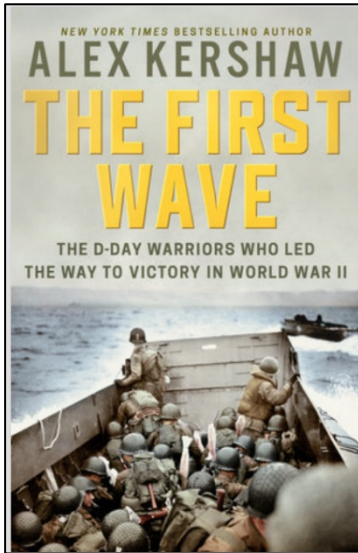
Barrister Drews: No further questions. Whew. He's a tough one.

It seems clear now that Big Guy is never, never, ever, ever going to cry uncle on this one, no matter how compelling the evidence--so I guess the place that we will leave it is that we will have to agree to disagree. End of story. But a good one.

BOOK REPORT:
THE FIRST WAVE: The D-Day Warriors Who
Led the Way to Victory in World War II

By Alex Kershaw

Penguin Publishing Group, May 2019



On the 75th anniversary of D-Day, I was so intrigued and moved by the reporting of the heroics, that I stopped in to Barnes and Noble and bought a book entitled *The First Wave*, to read more about it. If you are into that sort of thing, you will be fascinated by this book. The scope of Operation Overlord was so immense, it's hard to wrap your mind around. As one example, the Allied leadership decided to paint white circles on the noses of all Allied aircraft, so that they could be distinguished from enemy aircraft during the invasion. In the span of just a day or two, the servicemen who painted these stripes used *100,000* gallons of paint and *20,000* paint brushes. Just to paint a thin stripe on the noses of the planes. To me, this number

is mind-boggling.

For the infantry men who made the first landing, and knew they would be facing enemy fire from the moment that their landing crafts hit the ground, it is amazing that thousands upon thousands of them willingly participated in this mission, even knowing that some estimates were that as many as 80% of them would not come back alive. And the great majority of these men were not even fighting for their own country, but for reclaiming what Hitler took from France. The vast majority of the invading troops were Americans, then British, then Canadians and Australians, and then others, including a small number of men from the *French Resistance*.

Even after the massive deployment of manpower and war material on D-Day and the days that followed, it still took months, not days or weeks, to reclaim all of France and then cross over its border with Germany toward Berlin. Even with the massive loss of airplanes, tanks, guns, and most of all, men, Hitler stubbornly sent his men off to die in battle after battle that could not be won. According to *The First Wave*, something like 300,000 German soldiers (mostly boys) were killed every month for three months, while defending the Fatherland from the Allied war machine, all utterly senseless losses.

Reading *The First Wave* gave me a whole new appreciation for the sacrifices made by so many heroes from the Greatest Generation to secure our liberty--something far too many of us take for granted far too often.

I just picked up the book *Indianapolis: The True Story of the Worst Sea Disaster in the U.S. Naval History and the Fifty-Year Fight to Exonerate an Innocent Man*, which will tide me over until I dig into Volume 2 of Robert Caro's series on LBJ.

2019: A BASEBALL ODYSSEY

During this past fortnight, I have had the opportunity to take in quite a few baseball games at a host of different venues. Here's how it went:

SUNDAY, JUNE 16, TD AMERITRADE PARK

On a beautiful Father's Day evening, with the four Ernst kids in tow, we saw the Mississippi State Bulldogs put up 3 runs in the bottom of the 9th to knock Auburn into the loser's bracket. Although we weren't really rooting for either team throughout the game, it was hard not to cheer for the Bulldogs to mount a comeback by scoring 3 runs in their final frame, although it was unfortunate that a throwing error by the Auburn third baseman on a routine play (with two outs) contributed to the outcome.

I have lost track of how many years in a row I have been blessed to spend Father Day's evening at the College World Series with my four kids, but a blessing it is indeed.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, TD AMERITRADE PARK

On Wednesday night, I found myself in the company of Bender as well as Joe and Will for the matchup between Texas Tech and Florida State, an elimination contest between these two teams who had each lost to Michigan in an earlier round. Inasmuch as I was with Bender, and unable to drink beer because of my upcoming annual test in Pittsburgh, I won't put it in the same category of "blessings" that I spoke of in describing Sunday night, but it was better than sitting by, say, Donald Trump, Jr. or Devin Nunes or Mitch McConnell, for example. Unfortunately, the Red Raiders outplayed the Seminoles and advanced with a 4-to-1 victory, while retiring Florida State Coach Mike Martin ended his landmark 40 year career with a loss, and heads into retirement never having won the grand prize in 17 trips to Omaha. Still, a great day at the ballpark with three good baseball men.

FRIDAY, JUNE 21, PNC PARK

After taking a nice ride on the Propofol Express⁷ at UPMC, and after getting a clean report, my beloved better half and I headed out to PNC Park with Dr. Brand and his wife, our hosts, Brian and Beth Hennings, and one of my procedure nurses and her husband. After a very rainy spring in the Pittsburgh area, Pirates fans were ready for some nice weather and a glorious Friday evening at PNC Park, in spite of their recent losing skein and their dismal last place standing in the NL Central. Friday night's game featured a pitching duel between Joe Musgrove for the Pirates and Eric Lauer of the San Diego Padres, the latter of whom was also in the starting lineup for my **Senators** in our Hot Stove League competition.

After Lauer gave up an early Pirate run in the bottom of the 1st, he settled in and pitched very well from that point forward, and when Padre third sacker Manny Machado went yard in the top of the 4th inning, the game was knotted at 1 to 1 and it looked like Lauer had a shot at a win to go with a quality start. But then, Citizen Machado booted a routine grounder in the 7th--his second of the night--which led to a second Pirate run and collared Lauer with the loss in spite of his 1 earned run quality start. The unapologetic Machado seemed as if he could care less about costing his club and my man Lauer the game, just as long as he got his dinger to add to his offensive statistical totals.

Both before and after the game, we enjoyed adult libations of the microbrewery variety at a couple of happening establishments right next door to PNC Park, potentially in violation of my post EUS Discharge Suggestions. I'm sure by then the Propofol buzz had completely worn off though, so leave me alone.

MONDAY, JUNE 24, TD AMERITRADE PARK

It was back to TD Ameritrade Park on Monday evening to watch the first game of the CWS Championship between the Michigan Wolverines and the Vanderbilt Commodores. Since we didn't have tickets to this game, and since tickets on StubHub started out at an arm and a leg, we decided to take our chances with scalpers outside the ballpark, and waited them out until moments before the start of the game in order to get good seats (Section 120, four together) for the price that we wanted to pay⁸. As we were waiting for our lead negotiator to close the deal, the B2 bomber burst onto the scene from out of nowhere, one of the best flyovers any of us have experienced.

Once more joined by Bender, Joe and Will, it was another spectacular, pitch perfect weather night at TDA. This time, because I was able to have a beer or two, Bender was actually funny, as demonstrated by the following:

Itchie: "I asked Anne what she would do if I won the lottery. She said she would take her half and leave me."

(Slight pause for effect.)

So I told her I won 12 bucks last week, gave her 6 of it, and said to her, 'Keep in touch.' "

Okay, that one made all of us laugh.

But as to the game itself, Michigan looked awfully good and topped Vanderbilt by the score of 7 to 4 to take Game 1 of the Championship Series. As I have said, this might be the one time in my life that I would be cheering for the Wolverines to win.

TUESDAY, JUNE 25, NELSONCORP FIELD (CLINTON, IOWA)



After getting up at oh-dark-thirty and driving to Cedar Rapids for a couple of depositions, I kept on going east for about another 90 miles or so to the berg of Clinton, Iowa, located on the banks of the Mississippi River, to take in a Midwest League contest between the hometown Clinton LumberKings⁹ and the visiting Peoria Chiefs.¹⁰

⁷ Not being unmindful of the fact that Michael Jackson took one too many spins almost exactly ten years ago.

⁸ Watching Itchie negotiate with the brothers was a lesson in Demand Side Economics, taught in the Real World. In the course of about 8 minutes, Itchie talked our eventual seller down from \$125 a ticket to \$75, to \$60 ("Give me 60 apiece, man. I've got more than that in them!" **"No, you don't,"** barked Itchie, prompting the humiliated ticket broker to stomp off in disgust, only to return later when he saw Itchie entertaining offers from competitors, and the deal was then and only then made at the price our shrewd purchasing agent was willing to pay. Next time we need to get HSL Trip Tickets for the boys, Itchie's in charge.

⁹ A Class A, Minor League affiliate of the Miami Marlins.

¹⁰ A farm club of the Cleveland Indians.



There was a nice crowd at the park for a Tuesday night game, helped immeasurably by 2-dollar tickets, 2-dollar hot dogs, and 2-dollar beers. As I moved from vantage point to vantage point throughout all of the various viewing areas in the ballpark, I could see that it was a diverse group of fans in attendance, by appearance predominantly farmers and blue collar factory types, with a sprinkling of millennial snowflakes mixed in.

From reading my program, I learned that Clinton has been home to professional baseball for almost a hundred years. The ballpark where the game was held was built in 1927, but has had several renovations and upgrades to get it to where it is now. The LumberKings are the only remaining original member of the Midwest League, and won Midwest League championships in 1963 and 1991. Professional teams in Clinton have sent more than 200 players on to the Majors, including such luminaries as: Denny McLain, Tommy McCraw, Tom Kelly, Gorman Thomas, Ron Leflore, Mickey Hatcher, Ron Kittle, Mike Scioscia, Orel Hershiser, Steve Sax, Rob Deer, Matt Williams and Clay Bellinger.

A clamorous Clinton crowd cheered the LumberKings on to a come-from-behind 4-to-2 victory over the Chiefs, scoring 4 runs in the bottom of the 8th inning to take the lead, and then holding the Chiefs scoreless in the top of the 9th. The winning pitcher for the LumberKings was Raul Brito, and the loser for the Chiefs was Cole Aker. The announced attendance was 1,206.



WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 26, DuPAGE MEDICAL GROUP PARK
a/k/a "THE CLINK" (JOLIET, ILLINOIS)



On Wednesday morning, it was up early to take care of a few emails and crank out a day's worth of billables¹¹ and then on the road by 7:30 a.m. for the 2-1/2 hour drive to Joliet, Illinois, for a 10:05 a.m. Day Camp Day game against the visiting Florence Freedom (from Florence, Kentucky) in an independent Frontier League matchup. While I have probably driven through Joliet about a dozen times or so

while on Interstate 80 driving into or back from Chicago, I don't believe I've ever actually been in the city itself. Some beautiful architecture, and of course the famous Joliet State Prison, where large chunks of the *Blues Brothers* movie were shot, but which is no longer operational as a penal containment system.

In any event, once I arrived at The Clink located at 1 Mayor Art Schultz Drive, my jaw literally dropped. Yes, literally. As I got out of my car and caught my first glimpse of this absolute peach of a ballpark, I could barely believe my eyes. It is a sweetheart of a ballfield, which was kind of amazing considering that it is the home of an independent Frontier League team, which presumably receives little or no financial support from the Major Leagues.

¹¹ I kid, I kid. Sorry, not sorry.



The pictures won't do it justice, but take my word for it, this ballpark is a winner, and I absolutely loved everything about it. A couple of my favorite features include the "rooftop" seats beyond the left field wall, shown below, which actually look like they are on a building across the street, à la Wrigley Field, but which is actually a building which they constructed inside the confines of the park, merely for aesthetic purposes.



I love the fact that there isn't a bad seat in the entire park (which only seats 6,016), and that you can walk all the way around it, and stand about 20 feet away from the right fielder when you are behind the right field outfield fence. I thought that the panel of busts of ironworkers, shown below, was one of the coolest things I have ever seen, as they are situated on the outside of a brick building overlooking right field, and appear to be fans watching the game being played in front of them.



But my favorite feature of all is the bar that they have on the main concourse which overlooks home plate, and gives you a spectacular view of the entire field of play, as you sit at the bar and wet your whistle with new or old friends who are bellied up next to you. Below is the vantage point from a seat at said bar.



And speaking of new friends made at bars, here is a picture of my new pal "*Murph.*"



In the span of probably about three innings, I learned all of the following from the voluble *Murph*:

- He watched the entire Tuesday night baseball game from the same seat of the same bar, and then went out with the bartender and her boyfriend and drank shots of hard liquor until 5 a.m., which made getting to the ball-park/bar by 10:05 a.m. a bit challenging, but he did make it, to be clear.
- His young daughter from his first marriage likes to go to baseball games with him, but the *Slammers* always lose when she is along.
- The *Slammers* won the whole kit and kaboodle last season, and had the best road record of any team in the Frontier League, by far.
- He played Little League baseball in the Belmont Little League organization, the same organization that produced Jesse Barfield. He wasn't quite as good as Jesse, because he was very small and very slight when he was in high school, so they had to hide him out in right field until he eventually found out that second base was his natural position. He was just coming into his

own with both bat and glove when he broke his collarbone, effectively ending his baseball player aspirations.

- He attended college at the University of Illinois-Champaign, but there was no mention of a major, a course of study, or a graduation.
- His second wife, whom he clarified to be his “current” wife--which he clarified to mean that this is his wife now, and there is no reason to believe that she won’t be his wife in the future, he wasn’t implying that--works for Allstate Insurance in some capacity of which he is not certain, but which he believes to be management. Because she is able to work remotely, they are relocating soon to a little town near Paducah, Kentucky, which has a population of 350 people. Murph made it clear that there will be plenty of fishing and boating for him in his new area of residence, but there was no mention of employment on his part.

Everyone who worked at the ballpark seemed to know Murph, as they stopped by and fist-bumped him and made small talk as they went about their daily duties, so it is apparent that Murph spends an awful lot of time going to baseball games at The Clink, seated at the same spot in the bar. It’s unclear how he will fill his days after the move to Paducah, other than with alcohol. In any event, it was a little slice of heaven sharing a couple of cold brews with Murph, and learning all about his seemingly uncomplicated life.

A few more pics of this fabulous park:





And just for Sunny, a picture of mascot J.L.Bird:



WEDNESDAY EVENING, FIFTH THIRD BALLPARK
(COMSTOCK PARK, MICHIGAN)



the Stadium Club in dead center, and the Dream Deck in left.

On Wednesday night, after an easy 3.5 hour drive from Joliet,¹² I caught a game in a suburb of Grand Rapids, Michigan at Fifth Third Ballpark, a honey of a place. This ballpark, now in its 25th year of existence, is a beaut, with multiple interesting viewing areas throughout the property, including the Rooftop section in right field, the General Campground in center field,



¹² Except for the first 30 to 45 minutes, which were spent avoiding being crushed to smithereens by the seemingly endless stream of semitrucks which rule the roost on Interstate 80.





The variety and quality of the food at FTP was unsurpassed, in my experience. They have every kind of grilled dog available, diner-quality hamburgers, spectacular lamb and chicken gyros, and many, many other delectable choices. The smells emanating from the many grills on the main concourse are intoxicating, and if I haven't mentioned it already, there are multiple beer and spirits vendors available to dispense adult beverages to thirsty fans so they don't have to wait in long lines, putting to shame the concessionaires at TD Ameritrade Park in Omaha, I would add.

As to the baseball game itself, it started off with a bang when the leadoff Dragons hitter crushed the third pitch from Whitecaps starter Wilkel Hernandez far over the right field wall, a no-doubter that left the right fielder not needing to move a muscle. But this startling beginning would also be the end of the scoring for the Dragons. In reply, the hometown Whitecaps put four runs on the board in the bottom of the 1st, four more in the bottom of the 2nd to take an 8-1 lead, and continued to add more until the final tally of 15-1 was achieved. A genuine blow-out, but in spite of this, the great majority of the crowd stuck around to the end of the game, enjoying the exceedingly fan-friendly atmosphere.

I'm not sure exactly where I would put Fifth Third Ballpark on my list of minor league rankings, but it will definitely be in the Top Ten, maybe even the Top Five, when I finally get around to ranking the ones I have seen.

THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 27, PARKVIEW PARK
(FORT WAYNE, INDIANA)



The final leg of my self-serving adventure took me to Fort Wayne, Indiana, and a beautiful jewel of a ballpark known as Parkview Field, home of the Fort Wayne TinCaps. Rated by at least one respected ballpark-ranking company as the No. 1 Minor League Ballpark in all of America, it would be hard to argue against this point. My hotel, the Marriott Courtyard, bordered the field in one direction, with two other hotels located directly adjacent to it, and seemingly are part of the park structure. There are so many cool features to this ballpark that neither words nor pictures alone will do it justice, but suffice it to say that this park has what I would describe as an "aura" about it, which just makes it feel as if it is the only place that you want to be when you are within its confines.

It is also noteworthy that TinCap employees are universally welcoming, upbeat, almost bubbling with excitement about their field, and you can tell that this is a top-down attitude that starts with management. Below are a few photos from Parkview Field which I hope you will enjoy. Better yet, go visit it yourself, and you will see what I mean.





Oh, yeah. The game. Fort Wayne TinCaps 5, South Bend Cubs 2.

Eleven days, eight games, six states, six ballparks. Not a bad stretch.

HAPPY FOURTH!

As I close out this issue of *From the Bullpen*, I want to thank those of you who shared kind comments after the last issue. I certainly didn't mean to come across as a whiny bitch when I mentioned what I suspected to be waning readership interest, it's just that when there is nothing but radio silence following an expansive issue of *FTB*, I sometimes begin to wonder if anyone actually reads it, or if it is just a colossal waste of time, especially for Linda.¹³ I now know that it is not, and I appreciate those of you who took the time to say this.

Wishing you and your families a glorious and safe Independence Day holiday. God bless America!



¹³ From Linda: Please speak for yourself, Kemosabe. Working on the *FTBs* is my favorite part of the job. Not only do I get to watch a bunch of grown men, some of whom are grandpas, struggle to prove they have more baseball acumen than the others, I get to help make fun of them while they do it. I have my very own book reviewer who screens and reports on best sellers so that I don't have to read them myself. I have a personal shopper who brings me a souvenir coffee mug from every Minor League ballpark he visits, so I have quite a collection of those. And best of all, I am able to collect some quite nice material suitable for blackmail purposes should I ever be in need of same. God bless the First Amendment. Happy 4th indeed.