


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. 19

September 6, 2019¹














REDBIRDS STILL ON TOP

With the 2019 Hot Stove League season galloping toward the finish line, Tirebiter's indefatigable **Chirpers** are still clinging to the lead, although it has been reduced just a smidge. Here are the standings through 23 weeks of play:

¹ The date of this issue coincides with a red-letter day in baseball history, for today is the 24th anniversary of Cal Ripken's breaking of Lou Gehrig's record. Ahh, the memories!



**STANDINGS THRU WEEK 23
ENDING SEPTEMBER 1, 2019**

1	 Redbirds	11106.30	-
2	 Wahoos	10979.40	126.90
3	 Monarchs	10923.70	182.60
4	 Omaha Senators	10881.60	224.70
5	 BUMS	10722.40	383.90
6	 Skipjacks	10615.20	491.10
7	 Bronx Bombers	10263.30	843.00
8	 LINCOLN CHIEFS	9985.90	1120.40
9	 BEARS	9977.00	1129.30
10	 West Des Moines Cubs	9925.00	1181.30
11	 Tigers	9785.90	1320.40
12	 Tribe	9439.00	1667.30
13	 Kansas City Blues	9042.60	2063.70

**POINT TOTALS THRU WEEK 23
ENDING SEPTEMBER 1, 2019**

1	Senators	504.5
2	Wahoos	499.6
3	Skipjacks	474.5
4	Bums	446.9
5	Monarchs	445.7
6	Tigers	433.2
7	Blues	416.5
8	Bombers	401.9
9	Bears	369.6
10	Cubs	343.6
11	Redbirds	313.8
12	Tribe	273.5
13	Chiefs	233.4

Can Tirebiter and his plucky '**Birds** hang on? Just how "game" is this fowl team? Stay tuned, fellas.

And the individual totals:

TOP 25 PITCHERS

Justin Verlander Hou - SP 3:10 pm @Mil 🏟️	BUMS	825.00
Gerrit Cole Hou - SP 3:10 pm 🟢 @Mil 🏟️	Omaha Senators	715.00
Shane Bieber Cle - SP 6:10 pm vs CWS ☀️	Omaha Senators	654.00
Stephen Strasburg Was - SP Top 2, 0-0 vs NYM ☀️	Bronx Bombers	648.00
Zack Greinke Hou - SP 3:10 pm @Mil 🏟️	LINCOLN CHIE...	617.00
Jacob deGrom NYM - SP Top 2, 0-0 @Was ☀️	Skipjacks	609.00
Charlie Morton TB - SP Bot 1, 0-0 vs Bal 🏟️	Redbirds	605.00
Patrick Corbin Was - SP Top 2, 0-0 vs NYM ☀️	Omaha Senators	603.00
Luis Castillo Cin - SP 1:10 pm vs Phi 🏟️	Monarchs	592.00
Lucas Giolito CWS - SP 6:10 pm @Cle ☀️	Tribe	587.00
Clayton Kershaw LAD - SP 7:10 pm vs Col ☀️	Tigers	578.00
Aaron Nola Phi - SP 1:10 pm @Cin 🏟️	Wahoos	568.00
Walker Buehler LAD - SP 7:10 pm vs 🟢 Col ☀️	Skipjacks	560.00
Max Scherzer Was - SP Top 2, 0-0 vs NYM ☀️	Wahoos	560.00
Hyun-Jin Ryu LAD - SP 7:10 pm vs Col ☀️	West Des Moin...	557.00

Lance Lynn Tex - SP Top 1, Delay @NYY 📶	BUMS	554.00
Madison Bumgarner SF - SP 1:15 pm @StL 🏟️	Bronx Bombers	533.00
Sonny Gray Cin - SP,RP 1:10 pm vs Phi 🏟️	Monarchs	522.00
Mike Minor Tex - SP Top 1, Delay 🟢 @NYY 📶	BUMS	517.00
Jack Flaherty StL - SP 1:15 pm vs SF 🏟️	BEARS	500.00
Mike Fiers Oak - SP	Omaha Senators	500.00
José Berríos Min - SP Bot 1, 0-1 @Det 🏟️	Monarchs	499.00
Trevor Bauer Cin - SP 1:10 pm vs Phi 🏟️	Tribe	498.00
Mike Soroka Atl - SP Bot 1, 0-0 vs 🟢 Tor ☀️	Redbirds	492.00
Wade Miley Hou - SP 3:10 pm @Mil 🏟️	BUMS	480.00

WHO'S HOT -- PITCHERS

Justin Verlander Hou - SP 3:10 pm @Mil 🏟️	BUMS	77.00		
Miles Mikolas StL - SP 1:15 pm vs SF ☁️	BUMS	55.00		
Michael Pineda Min - SP Bot 1, 0-1 @Det ☁️	LINCOLN CHIE...	54.00		
Patrick Corbin Was - SP Top 2, 0-0 vs NYM 🌤️	Omaha Senators	52.00		
Stephen Strasburg Was - SP Top 2, 0-0 vs NYM 🌤️	Bronx Bombers	49.00		
Sonny Gray Cin - SP,RP 1:10 pm vs Phi ☁️	Monarchs	49.00		
Julio Teheran Atl - SP Bot 1, 0-0 vs Tor 🌤️	BUMS	48.00		
Eric Lauer SD - SP 3:10 pm @Ari 🏟️	Omaha Senators	44.00	Walker Buehler LAD - SP 7:10 pm vs Col 🌤️	Skipjacks 36.00
J.A. Happ NYY - SP Top 1, Delay vs Tex 🏟️	Wahoos	44.00	Yu Darvish ChC - SP 1:20 pm vs Sea ☁️	Bronx Bombers 36.00
Mike Clevinger Cle - SP 6:10 pm vs CWS 🌤️	Monarchs	43.00	Chris Paddack SD - SP 3:10 pm @Ari 🏟️	Wahoos 35.00
Joe Musgrove Pit - SP	Tigers	43.00	Madison Bumgarner SF - SP 1:15 pm @StL ☁️	Bronx Bombers 35.00
Luis Castillo Cin - SP 1:10 pm vs Phi ☁️	Monarchs	43.00	Ian Kennedy KC - SP,RP	BEARS 33.00
Anthony DeSclafani Cin - SP 1:10 pm vs Phi 🌤️	Skipjacks	39.00	Steven Brault Pit - SP,RP	Bronx Bombers 31.00
Homer Bailey Oak - SP	Kansas City Blu...	39.00	Carlos Martínez StL - SP,RP 1:15 pm vs SF ☁️	Redbirds 31.00
Masahiro Tanaka NYY - SP Top 1, Delay vs Tex 🏟️	Tigers	37.00	Max Fried Atl - SP,RP Bot 1, 0-0 vs Tor 🌤️	Skipjacks 30.00
Aaron Brooks Bal - SP,RP Bot 1, 0-0 @TB 🏟️	West Des Moin...	36.00	Alex Young Ari - SP 3:10 pm vs SD 🏟️	Bronx Bombers 30.00




















WHO'S NOT -- PITCHERS













Dylan Cease CWS - SP 6:10 pm @Cle ☀️	BEARS	-20.00
Reynaldo López CWS - SP 6:10 pm @Cle ☀️	Kansas City Blu...	-19.00
Noah Syndergaard NYM - SP Top 2, 0-0 🟢 @Was ☀️	Redbirds	-17.00
Martín Pérez Min - SP,RP Bot 1, 0-1 @Det ☁️	Bronx Bombers	-16.00
Cal Quantrill SD - SP,RP 3:10 pm 🟢 @Ari 🏟️	BEARS	-15.00
Mitch Keller Pit - SP	LINCOLN CHIE...	-10.00
Ross Detwiler CWS - SP,RP 6:10 pm 🟢 @Cle ☀️	BEARS	-10.00
Iván Nova CWS - SP 6:10 pm @Cle ☀️	Bronx Bombers	-9.00
Hyun-Jin Ryu LAD - SP 7:10 pm vs Col ☀️	West Des Moin...	-9.00
Pablo López Mia - SP	Redbirds	-8.00
Jacob Waguespack Tor - SP,RP Bot 1, 0-0 🟢 @Atl ☀️	West Des Moin...	-7.00
Chase Anderson Mil - SP,RP 3:10 pm vs Hou 🏟️	Wahoos	-6.00
Trevor Bauer Cin - SP 1:10 pm vs Phi ☁️	Tribe	-6.00
Framber Valdez Hou - SP,RP 3:10 pm @Mil 🏟️	LINCOLN CHIE...	-4.00
Caleb Smith Mia - SP	Redbirds	-3.00
Asher Wojciechowski Bal - SP,RP Bot 1, 0-0 🟢 @TB 🏟️	Skipjacks	-3.00
Marco Gonzales Sea - SP 1:20 pm @ChC ☁️	Wahoos	-3.00
Gio Gonzalez Mil - SP 3:10 pm vs Hou 🏟️	Kansas City Blu...	-2.00
Kyle Hendricks ChC - SP 1:20 pm vs 🟢 Sea ☁️	Tigers	-2.00

TOP 25 HITTERS

Mike Trout LAA - CF	Monarchs	702.50
Cody Bellinger LAD - 1B,CF,RF 7:10 pm vs Col ☀️	Bronx Bombers	677.10
Christian Yelich Mil - LF,CF,RF 3:10 pm vs ③ Hou 🏟️	Redbirds	672.20
Freddie Freeman Atl - 1B Bot 1, 0-0 vs ③ Tor ☀️	Monarchs	663.20
Anthony Rendon Was - 3B Top 2, 0-0 vs ③ NYM ☀️	West Des Moin...	658.20
Xander Bogaerts Bos - SS	Omaha Senators	649.20
Alex Bregman Hou - 3B,SS 3:10 pm ④ @Mil 🏟️	BEARS	646.40
Rafael Devers Bos - 3B	Kansas City Blu...	628.50
Ronald Acuña Jr. Atl - LF,CF,RF Bot 1, 0-0 vs ① Tor ☀️	Redbirds	618.90
Juan Soto Was - LF Top 2, 0-0 vs ④ NYM ☀️	Kansas City Blu...	606.00
Nolan Arenado Col - 3B 7:10 pm @LAD ☀️	Kansas City Blu...	605.40
Mookie Betts Bos - CF,RF	LINCOLN CHIE...	603.30
J.D. Martinez Bos - LF,RF	BUMS	591.90
Pete Alonso NYM - 1B Top 2, 0-0 ② @Was ☀️	Tribe	588.60
Carlos Santana Cle - 1B,3B 6:10 pm vs CWS ☀️	Kansas City Blu...	586.20
Josh Bell Pit - 1B	LINCOLN CHIE...	585.40
Ketel Marte Ari - 2B,SS,CF 3:10 pm vs ③ SD 🏟️	Skipjacks	581.80
Trevor Story Col - SS 7:10 pm @LAD ☀️	Wahoos	580.70
DJ LeMahieu NYY - 1B,2B,3B Top 1, Delay vs ① Tex 🏟️	Monarchs	570.40
Eduardo Escobar Ari - 2B,3B,SS 3:10 pm vs ④ SD 🏟️	Wahoos	562.20
Marcus Semien Oak - SS	Redbirds	560.00
Josh Donaldson Atl - 3B Bot 1, 0-0 vs ④ Tor ☀️	Monarchs	540.70
Charlie Blackmon Col - CF,RF 7:10 pm @LAD ☀️	Skipjacks	536.90
Bryce Harper Phi - CF,RF 1:10 pm ③ @Cin ☁️	Omaha Senators	535.40
Anthony Rizzo ChC - 1B 1:20 pm vs ④ Sea ☁️	BEARS	534.60

WHO'S HOT -- HITTERS

Eugenio Suárez Cin - 3B 1:10 pm vs  Phi  Day-to-	Redbirds	57.60
Yadier Molina StL - C 1:15 pm vs  SF 	Kansas City Blu...	56.60
Anthony Rendon Was - 3B Top 2, 0-0 vs  NYM 	West Des Moin...	51.90
Kevin Newman Pit - 2B,SS	Kansas City Blu...	51.70
Xander Bogaerts Bos - SS	Omaha Senators	50.60
J.D. Martinez Bos - LF,RF	BUMS	48.00
Jurickson Profar Oak - 1B,2B,3B,SS	Omaha Senators	47.90
Kolten Wong StL - 2B 1:15 pm vs  SF 	Kansas City Blu...	47.80
Josh Bell Pit - 1B	LINCOLN CHIE...	45.60
Juan Soto Was - LF Top 2, 0-0 vs  NYM 	Kansas City Blu...	45.50
Matt Olson Oak - 1B	Wahoos	44.40
George Springer Hou - CF,RF 3:10 pm  @Mil 	Tribe	42.00
Freddie Freeman Atl - 1B Bot 1, 0-0 vs  Tor 	Monarchs	41.30
Eduardo Escobar Ari - 2B,3B,SS 3:10 pm vs  SD 	Wahoos	40.20
Starling Marte Pit - CF	Skipjacks	39.60
Jorge Polanco Min - SS Top 2, 0-1  @Det 	Omaha Senators	39.10
Marcus Semien Oak - SS	Redbirds	38.90
Nolan Arenado Col - 3B 7:10 pm @LAD 	Kansas City Blu...	38.40

Todd Frazier NYM - 3B Top 2, 0-0  @Was 	Bronx Bombers	38.20
Aaron Judge NYY - RF Top 1, Delay vs  Tex 	Tigers	37.50
Anthony Santander Bal - LF,CF,RF Bot 1, 0-0  @TB 	BEARS	37.00
Mallex Smith Sea - LF,CF,RF 1:20 pm  @ChC 	Omaha Senators	37.00
Bryan Reynolds Pit - LF,CF,RF	BEARS	37.00
DJ LeMahieu NYY - 1B,2B,3B Top 1, Delay vs  Tex 	Monarchs	36.30
Cavan Biggio Tor - 2B,RF Bot 1, 0-0  @Atl 	Wahoos	36.30

WHO'S NOT -- HITTERS

★ Jason Heyward ChC - CF,RF 1:20 pm vs 1 Sea ☁	Tribe	-7.00
★ Yonder Alonso Col - 1B 7:10 pm @LAD ☀	Tigers	-3.50
★ Austin Nola Sea - 1B,2B 1:20 pm x @ChC ☁	West Des Moin...	-3.20
★ Mike Moustakas Mil - 2B,3B 3:10 pm vs 4 Hou 🏟	Wahoos	-2.00
★ Dwight Smith Jr. Bal - LF Bot 1, 0-0 x @TB 🏟	Tribe	-2.00
★ Cameron Maybin NYY - LF,CF,RF Top 1, Delay vs x Tex 🔄 Day-to-	Kansas City Blu...	-2.00
★ Mike Tauchman NYY - LF,CF,RF Top 1, Delay vs 7 Tex 🔄	Tigers	-1.50
★ James McCann CWS - C 6:10 pm @Cle ☀	Bronx Bombers	-1.40
★ Alex Dickerson SF - LF,RF 1:15 pm 4 @StL ☁	LINCOLN CHIE...	-1.00
★ Yoán Moncada CWS - 2B,3B 6:10 pm @Cle ☀	Tribe	-0.90
★ Luis Urías SD - 2B,SS 3:10 pm 7 @Ari 🏟	LINCOLN CHIE...	-0.70
★ Jay Bruce Phi - 1B,LF,RF 1:10 pm x @Cin ☁	BEARS	-0.50
★ Nomar Mazara Tex - RF Top 1, Delay 4 @NYY 🔄	Kansas City Blu...	-0.50
★ Leury García CWS - SS,LF,CF,RF 6:10 pm @Cle ☀	Tribe	-0.50

SKIP SEZ

- How about Verlander tossing another no-no at age 36, only the sixth player in Major League history to have three or more no-hitters. In tossing the 300th no-hitter in Major League history, Verlander joins the rarified air of Nolan Ryan (7 no-hitters--untouchable), Sandy Koufax (4 no-hitters, one each in 1962-1965), and Cy Young (3), Rapid Robert Feller (3) and some old dude I had never heard of before, Larry Corcoran (who threw his 3 between August 1880 and June 1884). Verlander will undoubtedly end the season as the top-scoring pitcher in our league, and so we should all be ashamed of the fact that he lasted until the 6th pick of the 2nd round before he was picked up by Magpie.
- The fact that the **Senators** have 3 pitchers in the top 8 (Cole, Corbin and Bieber, drafted in the 2nd, 4th and 8th rounds, respectively) helps explain why the **Senators** remain in contention. Pitching is *everything* in this league.

- While Verlander's stellar 2019 season is of course one reason why the **Bums** are still in the hunt, you also have to consider that the pitchers that he took in the 23rd round (Lance Lynn), 27th round (Wade Miley) and the Free Agent Draft (Mike Minor) are still in the Top 25. Were these all blind pig picks, or is Magpie the league Pitcher Whisperer? Close call.
- Leading the "Who's Not--Pitchers" list is Dylan "Cease and Desist" of the Chicago White Sox and SloPay's **Bears**, who did the Michael Jackson moonwalk to the tune of minus 20. Close behind was Reynaldo López, also a Pale Hoser but owned in our league by the **Blues**, who went backwards to the tune of minus 19. However, last night this same Reynaldo López spun a gem of a 1-hit shutout, garnering 45 points for the **Blues**. I love the fact that Stretch is still competing, right down to the bitter end.
- Next on the "Who's Not--Pitchers" list was Noah Syndergaard, he of the **Redbirds**, who trotted the '**Boids** back to the tune of 17 points to the red. Ouch. Jimmy didn't need that in the heat of a pennant race.
- Although he's cooled off considerably, Mike Trout of the **Monarchs** continues to lead the circuit amongst Hot Stove League hitters with 702.5 points. Cody Bellinger has stayed hot all season long and is next at 677.1. Christian Yelich of the **Redbirds** is 3rd at 672.2 points, and the **Monarchs'** Freddie Freeman is 4th with 663.2 points.

MURPHY THE OPTIMIST

Although I generally see myself as a Glass Half Full kind of guy, after more than 62 years of treading the globe I recognize that there are certain immutable laws of nature that cannot be changed and must be simply grinned at and borne. Case in point, the other day I went in for a morning workout at Lifetime Fitness, arriving at about 7:15 a.m. on a Thursday, a time when the morning shift of workout zealots was already gone and the lunchtime surge was still hours away. As such, there were only two or three other people in the men's locker room when I selected my locker--No. 157--from the 350+ choices that I had in front of me. *An excellent selection*, I thought. Not too close to the men's room, a popular spot; and not too close to the showers, another frequented area. Just like in the fairy tale, not too hot, not too cold, *just right*.

Wrong. After I finished my workout and then my shower, I headed over to locker No. 157 and, naturally, found my locker surrounded on one side by a Dan Blocker lookalike and on the other side by Methuselah's great grandfather. I could see that neither of them was in a hurry to get dressed or undressed, as the case may have been, so I grabbed the nearest trowel and plastered a grin on my face, shook my head to myself, and shuffled around the locker room for the next ten to fifteen minutes until my locker neighbors cleared out.

Here's the thing. It didn't matter if I took locker 157, or locker 1, or locker 349, or any locker in between, the outcome was going to be exactly the same: slow-motion dressers all around. Argh!

Other compelling evidence that Murphy was an optimist:

- As a corollary to the Gym Locker Selection Phenomenon discussed above, on another recent visit to Lifetime for a workout--this time beginning at around 8 a.m. on a Wednesday, a decidedly off-peak time at this particular gymnasium--I ran into the full

on *Not So Fast, Buster--I Was Here First* phenomenon. Normally I try to do two or three sets of weight machine exercises at 8-10 different stations, starting with a set of seated curls, then a set of pec flies, then a set of leg curls, and so forth and so on, until I have made three different laps around my self-designed circuit. On a day like Wednesday, it didn't matter if there were 3 other people working out in this massive workout space or 300, I was going to find another warm body sitting on the very machine that I wanted to use² with maddening mathematically-improbable frequency. In such soul-trying times, all one can do is grin, bear it, and mutter to the heavens, "Why me, Lord?" A first world problem, to be sure, but nonetheless, a problem.

- As I painfully learned going on 60 years ago on a side trip to Wall Drug while on a family trip to the Black Hills, if you drop a piece of toast with jelly on it during breakfast, it will land jam side down no less than 98% of the time.³

SWEET HOME ALABAMA

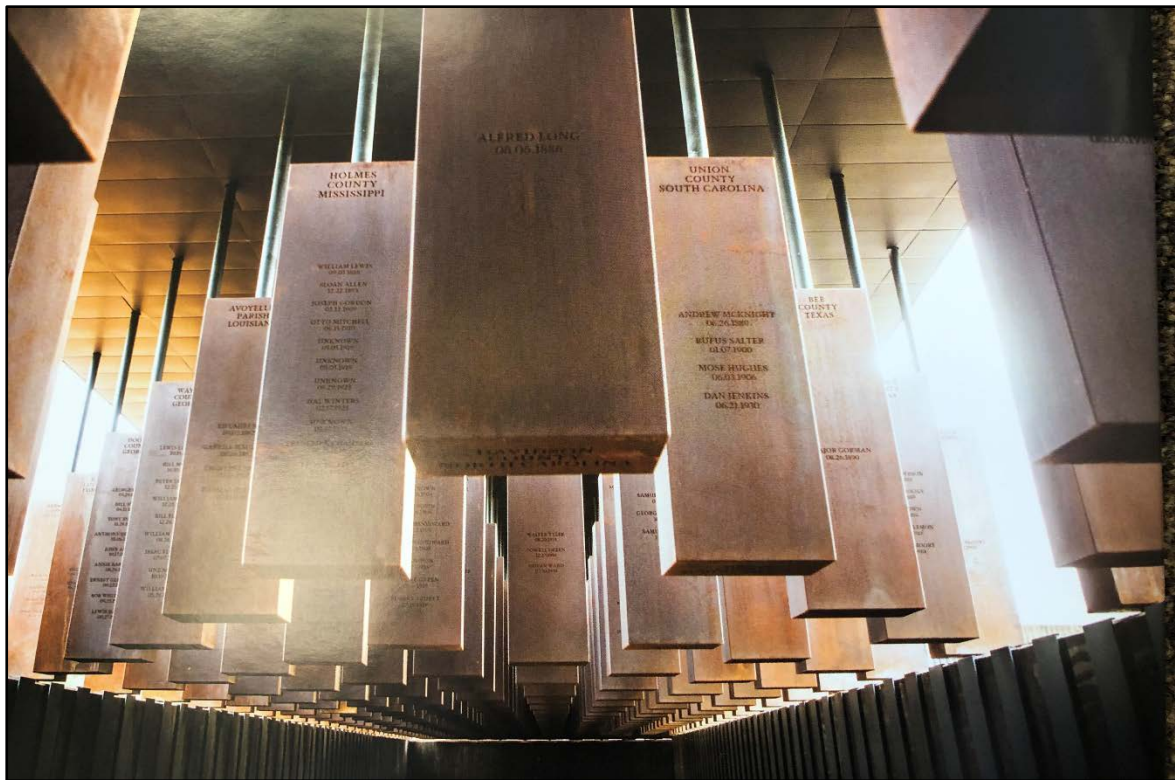
Over the Labor Day weekend just past, my long-suffering minor league baseball companion Michele accompanied me on a trip to Alabama for a bit of cultural awareness and some minor league baseball. After flying into Birmingham on Friday night, we drove to the state capitol of Montgomery on Saturday morning and promptly found a nifty little sports bar named Wing-ers to wet our whistles and to watch the Husker game against South Alabama, a college located just a couple of hours down the road in Mobile. No, we did not think it was an away game and schedule this trip by mistake. It was intentional.

After witnessing the Huskers survive their opener against the Jaguars, we went on a walking tour of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, the so-called "Lynching Museum" which was the brainchild and creation of the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, Bryan Stevenson, author of the best-selling book *Just Mercy*.⁴ As you might imagine, it was a very sobering experience.

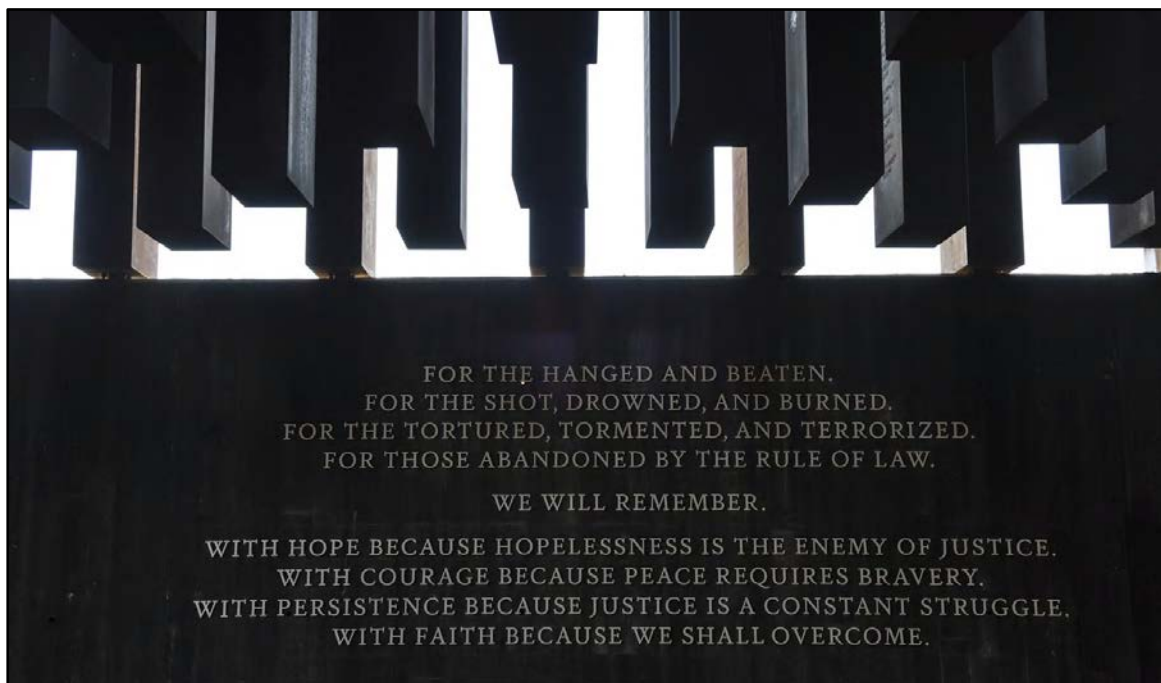
² And usually staring moronically at his or her iPhone instead of actually doing work on the machine.

³ In fact, I can still hear my dad's acerbic words ringing out after the toast slipped from my hands: "Jam side down, of course!"

⁴ Written about in more detail in the March 9, 2017 issue of *From the Bullpen*.



The purpose of the Memorial is to raise awareness of the brutal treatment of blacks in the South during and following Reconstruction, and to help people understand how these physical lynchings evolved into “legal” lynchings with the wrongful false and/or trumped up prosecution of poor, mostly African American males, who could not afford competent defense counsel. Bryan Stevenson has made it his life’s work to reverse as many of these unjust legal lynching verdicts that he can, and to raise awareness of the crooked prosecutions that are still going on in the Deep South today, believe it or not.





After visiting the National Memorial, we then spent a couple of hours in the related Legacy Museum (subtitled *From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration*). As with the lynching museum, the Legacy Museum is a place for sober reflection and self-education.



After this dual experience, I think I finally kind of get it. After their Civil War defeat following years of bloody battle, the collective South was just plain ticked off that the North (the federal government) was now telling them what they had to do and how they had to live their lives. This anger and resentment went much deeper and was more widespread than merely affecting former slave owners, who formed only a very small percentage of the Southern population, the wealthy plantation barons. The South just plain didn't cotton (pardon the pun) to Reconstruction and being told that *this* is how it's going to be, and even the good people of the Bible Belt too often turned a blind eye when their malevolent Southern neighbors began taking the law into their own hands and killing innocent blacks, often through public lynchings, but also through many other tools of murder.

With the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the prosecution of white Southerners for murdering innocent blacks, the physical lynchings slowed down and then stopped, but in their place came the legal lynchings, when prosecutors would charge innocent black men with crimes that they didn't commit, or overcharge them for crimes that they *did* commit, and thus began the era of mass incarceration of black males. Thankfully, there are people like Bryan Stevenson and his fellow lawyers at the Equal Justice Initiative who are helping to dismantle this systemic judicial and prosecutorial House of Shame, brick by brick, defendant by defendant.

End of lesson. Amen.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL?

I'm glad you asked. After an afternoon of sober reality, the plan for Saturday night was to catch a baseball game between the Montgomery Biscuits and the Pensacola Blue Wahoos at beautiful Riverwalk Stadium, about a two-block walk from the Legacy Museum. However, as we learned that afternoon, just a few hours before game time, the Biscuits rescheduled the Saturday night contest because of a recent, tragic murder involving one of the team's pitchers, Blake Bivens, whose wife, 14-month-old child and mother-in-law were all murdered by his wife's 18-year-old younger brother in Keeling, Virginia. The young murderer was arrested by the authorities after leading them on a chase, as he ran buck naked through the streets of Keeling. Clearly some mental disturbance was in the mix.

That was a first for me, a game I was planning on attending that got canceled or postponed because of a homicide. Tragic. So no report here on the Biscuits' beautiful ballpark.

Fortunately, the Labor Day weekend ended on a higher note for us. Instead of going to the Biscuits game on Saturday night, we listened to some terrific live country music at our hotel bar just a few blocks away from Riverwalk Stadium. The next morning, we got up and did a bit of a walking tour of downtown Montgomery, including the grounds of the state capitol, which still has numerous monuments to the Confederacy and its only president, Jefferson Davis.

Progress isn't always easy or fast. On the other hand, there is also a monument celebrating the March 1965 Freedom March from Selma to the Montgomery state capitol, led by the late Martin Luther King, Jr.



So there's that.

STUCK INSIDE OF MOBILE WITH THE MEMPHIS BLUES AGAIN

The next stop on our sojourn was Mobile, Alabama, and the southern end of the state near the Gulf of Mexico. Fortunately, our Mad Hatter president's attempt to redraw the Zone of Danger of Hurricane Dorian to include Alabama was not quite on the mark, and we were spared any bad weather resulting from the storm.

Once in Mobile, we made it to a 2:05 p.m. game between the Mobile BayBears and the visiting Tennessee Smokies at Hank Aaron⁵ Stadium. This was to be the next-to-last game in Mobile BayBears history as they are moving to Huntsville next year where they will be known as the Huntsville Trash Pandas. Whatever.

⁵ Perhaps the most famous native of Mobile.





As there were only about a hundred fans in attendance, it's not hard to see why the BayBears are skipping town. The town of Mobile apparently has not embraced them for a number of years, and they will be moving into a brand spanking new ballpark in Huntsville, which will be a dramatic improvement over Hank Aaron Stadium, which was more along the lines of Sherman Field in Lincoln. Small, nothing grand or fancy about it, with very few fan amenities. In spite of this, we enjoyed watching a stocky left-hander named Greg Mahle mow down the visiting Smokies to lead the last-place BayBears to a convincing 8 to 4 victory in their next-to-last game. And of course we enjoyed mixing with the madcap BayBears mascot, Kookie:



And Michele even talked one of the BayBear attendants out of an official game ball from the game. So there was that.

During a slow inning of the game, we meandered over to the boyhood home of Hammerin' Hank, which was moved to the grounds of Hank Aaron Stadium and restored to its former condition. Hard to believe that Hank and his parents and his six siblings all were able to fit into this tiny but well-kept cottage.



After the baseball game, we took an Uber down to Felix's Fish Camp for a delightful meal on the water, and then found the local bar scene adjacent to a somewhat sketchy area of downtown Mobile, where we had an uneventful nightcap.

The following morning, it should be written here, we had a fairly frantic 5 a.m. drive to the Mobile airport for our 6 a.m. flight, with Michele behind the wheel, beginning with her errant turn down the wrong way of a one-way street, where we were soon faced with multiple pairs of headlights bearing down on us. Fortunately, tragedy was averted when Michele veered into a nearby parking lot a split second or two before a head-on collision. Once back on course, we hit ten or fifteen consecutive red lights on Airline Road--which threatened to make us miss our flight--because Gomer or Goober or Bocephus or whoever's in charge of the Mobile Traffic Light Department has never heard of the concept of "timing lights." To ease the tension, I accessed a YouTube video of Bob Dylan on my personal mobile device, so that we could listen to a few verses of an epic Bob Dylan tune as we made our way pell-mell to the airport:

*Oh, the ragman draws circles
Up and down the block
I'd ask him what the matter was
But I know that he don't talk
And the ladies treat me kindly
And they furnish me with tape
But deep inside my heart*

*I know I can't escape
Oh, Mama, can this really be the end
To be stuck inside of **Mobile** with the
Memphis blues again*

*Well, Shakespeare, he's in the alley
With his pointed shoes and his bells
Speaking to some French girl
Who says she knows me well
And I would send a message
To find out if she's talked
But the post office has been stolen
And the mailbox is locked
Oh, Mama, can this really be the end
To be stuck inside of **Mobile**
With the Memphis blues again*

The happy ending to the story is that we did make it to the airport on time, caught our flight, and even made it to Atlanta early enough to catch an earlier flight back to Homaha.

LATE INNINGS
A Baseball Companion
By Roger Angell

As promised, I include below an excerpt from Angell's August 1980 masterpiece entitled "Distance," about Bob Gibson, and specifically, Angell's visit to Omaha to interview Gibson.

It was ninety-seven degrees at the Omaha airport when I landed there early one evening in July, and when I called Bob Gibson from my motel he invited me to come on out and cool off with a dip in his pool. He picked me up in his car--a black 1972 Mercedes SEL, lovingly kept up, with CB equipment (his call signal is Redbird) and terse "BG" license plates. Gibson looked well kept up himself, in tailored jeans, a white polo shirt, thin gold spectacles, a gold bracelet on his left wrist, a World Series ring, and a necklace with a pendant "45" in gold--his old uniform number. He is forty-four years old, but only his glasses spoiled the impression that he was perfectly capable of working nine tough innings the next afternoon. I asked him what he did for exercise these days, and he said, "Nothing." I expressed surprise, and he said, "I played sports hard for thirty years, which is enough. Now I'm tired of all that." No apology, no accompanying smile or joke; no small talk. He spoke pleasantly enough, though, in a light, almost boyish voice, and when he did laugh--a little later, after we were more used to each other--the sound of it made me realize that only in the world of sports would he be considered anything but a young man. There were some quiet spells in the car during our longish drive out to his house, in Bellevue, a comfortable suburban district on the south side of town, but by the time we got there I had lost any sense of foreboding that I might have had about imposing myself on such a famously private man.

Bob Gibson has done well for himself in Omaha. He was born and grew up there in the black North Side ghetto; his mother was a laundress, and his father died before he was born. He was the youngest of seven children--his three sisters and three brothers are all still living--and at the time of his birth the family lived in a four-room shack. When he was an infant there, he was bitten on the ear by a rat. By the end of his playing days, Gibson was earning more than a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, which made him one of the two or three best-paid players of his time, and he invested his money with care. Today, he is the chairman of the board--an inter-racial board--of the Community Bank of Nebraska, which he helped get started seven years ago, and which does most of its business in the black community of Omaha. He is also the co-owner and the active, day-to-day manager of a new and successful medium-sized bar-restaurant called Gibby's, a couple of blocks away from Creighton University, which Gibson entered as a freshman on a basketball scholarship in 1954. Much of Gibson's life these days seems new. Gibby's opened in late 1978, and last November he was married to Wendy Nelson, whom I met at their home, to the accompaniment of frenzied barking from their four-month-old miniature schnauzer, Mia. ("Kill, Mia!" Gibson said delightedly. "Kill, girl!") Wendy Gibson, a composed, striking-looking blond woman in her late twenties, is in the financial division of the local telephone company, where she works, by preference, on the very early shift, driving to work each day shortly after dawn in the family's other Mercedes. (Gibson's previous marriage, to Charline Johnson, ended in divorce some years ago; their children, Renee and Annette, are grown up and have moved away from Omaha. A captivating oil portrait of the two girls and their father--all of them much younger then--hangs in Gibson's study in his new house; the artist is an old friend and teammate, Curt Flood.) Wendy and Bob Gibson moved into their house last July. It is a spacious, comfortably furnished and carpeted three-story contemporary wooden structure, with a sundeck that looks over a steep hillside and a thick green growth of oaks and cottonwoods. A flight of steps leads down from the deck to a big swimming pool, which had had its inaugural only a week before my arrival. Bob Gibson is handy. He helped design the new house, and he put in the deck stairs and built a raised wooden patio beside the pool, and also most of the landscape work on the grounds, laying in some old railroad ties to form a rose garden and planting shrubs and young trees everywhere. The pool was built to Gibson's design; its sides and bottom are painted black--a da Vinci-like idea of his, meant to help the water hold the heat of the sun in the spring and fall. Somehow, though, he had not remembered the warmish midsummer Nebraska sunshine, and when he and I slipped into the inky waves, the water temperature stood at ninety-two degrees--only a fraction cooler than the steamy, locust-loud night air. "Another mistake," Gibson said mildly. Swimming was a bit like sloshing through black-bean soup, but after a couple of turns up and down the pool he and I settled ourselves comfortably enough on the top steps at the shallow end, with our

legs dangling in the water, and while Mia sniffed and circled me warily we talked a little baseball.

I asked Gibson if he recalled the low-and-inside pitch he had thrown to Tony Oliva in that All-Star game, against Joe Torre's signals.

"Well, I never really liked being on the All-Star team," he said. "I liked the honor of it, being voted one of the best, but I couldn't get used to the idea of playing with people from other teams in the league--guys who I'd have to go out and try to beat just a couple of days later. I didn't even like having Joe catch me--he was with the Braves then--because I figured he'd learn how to hit me. In that same game, he came out and told me not to throw the high fastball to Harmon Killebrew, because the word was that he ate up that pitch." Gibson's voice was almost incredulous as he said this. "Well, hell. I struck him out with three high fastballs. But in any of the All-Star games where I got to pitch early"--Gibson was voted onto the National League All-Star squad eight times--"I'd always dress right away and get out of there in a hurry, before the other players got done and came into the clubhouse. I didn't want to hang around and make friends. I don't think there's any place in the game for a pitcher smiling and joking with the hitters. I was all business on the mound--it is a business, isn't it?--and I think some of the writers used to call me cold or arrogant because of that. I didn't want to be friends with anybody on the other side, except perhaps with Willie Stargell--how could you not talk to that guy? None of this was meant to scare guys, or anything. It was just the way I felt. When Orlando Cepeda was with us, I used to watch him and Marichal laughing and fooling around before a game. They'd been on the Giants together, you know. But then Cepeda would go out and kill Marichal at the plate--one of the best pitchers I ever saw, and when it was over they'd go to dinner together and laugh some more. It just made me shake my head. I didn't understand it."

I had been wondering how to bring up the business of his knocking down his old roommate Bill White, but now Gibson offered the story of his own accord. "Even before Bill was traded, I used to tell him that if he ever dived across the plate to swing at an outside pitch, the way he liked to, I'd have to hit him," he said. "And then, the very first time, he went for a pitch that was this far outside and swung at it, and so I hit him on the elbow with the next pitch. [Some years earlier, Gibson hit Duke Snider after similar provocation, and broke his elbow.] Bill saw it coming, and he yelled 'Yeah!' even before it got him. And I yelled over to him, 'You son of a bitch, you went for that outside ball! That pitch, that part of the plate, belongs to me. If I make a mistake inside, all right, but the outside is mine and don't you forget it.' He said, 'You're crazy,' but he understood me."

I mentioned a famous moment when Gibson had hit Tommie Agee, of the Mets, on the batting helmet with the very first pitch of

the first inning of the first Cardinals spring-training game in 1968. Agee had come over from the Chicago White Sox and the American League in the previous winter, and when Gibson's first swallow of the spring conked him, several Gibson students among the Mets and Cardinals baseball writers in the press box at Al Lang Field called out, "Welcome to the National League, Tommie!" (Agee went to the hospital for observation, but was found not to have suffered serious injury.)

Gibson was silent for a moment, and then he said, "It's very easy to hit a batter in the body with a pitch. There's nothing to it. It's a lot harder to hit him in the head. Any time you hit him in the head, it's really his own fault. Anyway, that was just spring training.

Joe Torre had told me that the Agee-plunking was an accident, but I noted now that Gibson had not quite denied intention in the affair. He had put doubt in my mind, just as Torre had told me he would. He still wanted that edge.

"I did throw at John Milner in spring training once," Gibson went on, paddling his legs in the water. "Because of that swing of his-- that dive at the ball." Milner, an outfielder then with the Mets and now with the Pirates, invariably takes a full-scale, left-handed down-town swing at the ball, as if he meant to pull every pitch into the right-field stands. "I don't like batters taking that big cut, with their hats falling off and their buttons popping and every goddam thing like that. It doesn't show any respect for the pitcher. That batter's not doing any thinking up there, so I'm going to *make* him think. The next time, he won't look so fancy out there. He'll be a better-looking hitter. So I got Milner that once, and then, months later, at Shea Stadium, Tom Seaver began to pitch me up and inside, knocking me down, and it took me a minute to realize that it must have been to pay me back for something *in spring training*. I couldn't believe that."

There was a little silence at poolside while I digested this. Gibson sounded almost like a veteran samurai warrior recalling an ancient code of pain and honor. I suggested that there must be days when he still badly missed being out there on the mound, back in the thick of things.

"No, I have no desire to get out and throw the fastball again," he said quietly. "Even if I wanted to, I couldn't."

I had noticed that Gibson limped slightly as he walked around the pool, and the accounts of some of his baseball injuries and how he had reacted to them at the time came back to me. In July of 1967, while pitching against the Pirates in St. Louis, he was struck just above his right ankle by a line drive off the bat of Roberto Clemente. He went down in a heap, but after the Cardinals trainer had treated the injury with a pain-deadening spray, Gibson insisted on staying in the game. He walked Willie Stargell, retired Bill Mazeroski on a pop-

up, and then, firing a three-two pitch to Donn Clendenon, came down hard on the right leg with his characteristic spinning follow-through and snapped the already cracked bone. Dal Maxvill, then a Cardinals shortstop and now a Cardinals coach, said to me recently, "That was the most extraordinary thing I ever saw in baseball--Gibby pitching to those batters with a broken leg. Everyone who was there that day remembered it afterward, for always, and every young pitcher who came onto our club while Gibson was still with us was told about it. We didn't have too many pitchers turning up with upset stomachs or hangnails on our team after that."

Gibson came back to win three games against the Red Sox in the World Series that fall, but his next serious injury, in midseason of 1973, took a heavier toll. Leading off first base in a game against the Mets at Shea Stadium, he made a sudden dive back toward the base after an infield line drive was caught, but collapsed when his right knee buckled. The trainer and the team doctor came out to succor him, but Gibson cried "Don't touch it! Don't touch it!" and again refused to be taken out of the game. When the inning ended, he walked to the mound and began his warmup tosses and fell heavily to the ground. The surgeon, Dr. Stan London--who performed the cartilage operation the next day said afterward that Gibson had the knees of an eighty-year-old man. Gibson recovered in time to pitch and win a game that September, and he continued for two more full seasons on the mound, although, as he told me now, he sometimes had to sit in the clubhouse for two hours after a game before he felt able to head for the showers. "I'd had the left knee drained about seventeen times, too," he said. "I'd sit like this"--he hung his head and arms like a broken puppet--"and I'd think, *Why do I put up with this? Why, why?*" He laughed now, mocking himself. "I just couldn't give it up," he said. "Couldn't let go."

I don't know about you, but I could read Angell on Gibson all day long, and then again tomorrow.

TIME TO WRAP IT UP

I enjoyed Robert's recollection of our visit to Boulder in 1982 to watch the Huskers whip the Buffaloes for the 15th straight time. I had forgotten all about that exchange with the obnoxious Boulder fans in front of us.

Bob's memory is excellent. When I googled the game, it shows a Folsom Field that was about 90% red. The headline is "*Huskers Rozier Grinds up Buffaloes*," in a game that was close for a while but ended up being won by the Huskers by the tune of 40 to 14. Rozier cranked out 212 yards on the ground and scored two touchdowns. Man, could we ever use him now.

Anyway, thanks for the memories, Bob.

Sorry for the length of this issue. Hope that you enjoyed it.

Skipper