



Bob Gibson and Stan Musial,
Spring Training 1961, Tampa Bay

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

SEASON XXXVI



Angry no more.

FROM THE BULLPEN

2020 Campaign

Edition No. 20

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Brothers Twelve:

Happy Friday and a chipper October HeyHowAreYou to a dozen of the most solid citizens I know, my Hot Stove League amigos! And belated Happy Birthday to the Oracle, the one, the only, Brother Underbelly, who turned 65 years of age just yesterday.

And of course, a hearty congratulations to Brother Shamu, who last Sunday captured his fourth Hot Stove League crown in this abbreviated campaign, joining some extremely select company. Although Tirebiter has not yet committed to a peaceful transfer of power, it is widely anticipated that come January 2021, The Cup will trade hands, and Shamu will add the year 2020 to our HSL loving cup to go along with his 1994, 2007 and 2009 Shamu etchings.

FINAL STANDINGS

The final standings for the 2020 campaign look like this:

STANDINGS THRU WEEK 10 ENDING SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

1	Cubs	4816.5	-
2	Bear Devils	4444.0	372.5
3	Wahoos	4389.5	427.0
4	Bums	4363.5	453.0
5	Monarchs	4303.4	513.1
6	Saints	4300.6	515.9
7	Senators	4231.9	584.6

8	Redbirds	4034.4	782.1
9	Skipjacks	3839.8	976.7
10	Bombers	3835.6	980.9
11	Tigers	3521.1	1295.4
12	Blues	3402.5	1414.0
13	The Moe Szyslaks	3344.1	1472.4

And how did Shamu win the title this season? The *E.F. Hutton* way, he *earned* it. I mean, yes, Shamu picked a credit-worthy team in our Draft, to be sure, but where the rubber met the road for the **Cubs**, this year was Shamu's yeoman work on the Free Agent wire. Nobody, mark my words, *nobody* ever worked the system harder, or gamed a system more adroitly, as evinced by his sheer number of transactions this season, 132, which averages out to just under 2 transactions per day of the season. In September alone, Shamu made **60** FA moves. Not even in his heyday at Allied when he spent three hours each morning in the commode with his newspaper and company pen to circle the names of potential Free Agent pickup prospects--with his feet lifted off the floor to avoid detection--has Shamu ever toiled so tirelessly during a Hot Stove League campaign. So bully to you, Brother Shamu, because the 2020 season belongs to you.

Congrats also to SloPay who parlayed his superlative Draft Day selections--including Top Ten hitters Manny Machado, Fernando Tatis Jr. and Mike Trout--into a sterling second place **Bear Devils** finish; and of course to PAwesome for stomping on the accelerator during the last fortnight of the campaign to muscle his way into third.

Here are the point totals for the final week of play:

**POINTS FOR WEEK 10
ENDING SEPTEMBER 27, 2020**

1	Wahoos	575.3
2	Monarchs	558.0
3	Saints	540.5
4	Cubs	515.8
5	Bombers	491.6
6	Skipjacks	489.1
7	Senators	457.2
8	Redbirds	444.2
9	Bums	431.1

10	The Moe Szyslaks	378.2
11	Bear Devils	358.0
12	Tigers	333.3
13	Blues	281.8

PLAYER POINT TOTALS

Here are the top 25 hitters for the 2020 season:

1.	Freddie Freeman	Blues	330.2
2.	Marcell Ozuna	Bombers	312.0
3.	José Abreu	Cubs	292.7
4.	Trea Turner	Bombers	289.5
5.	Fernando Tatis Jr.	Bear Devils	288.6
6.	José Ramírez	Redbirds	288.5
7.	Manny Machado	Bear Devils	278.0
8.	Mike Trout	Bear Devils	266.0
9.	Juan Soto	Cubs	262.1
10.	Mookie Betts	Bums	256.3
11.	Luke Voit	The Moe Szyslaks	256.0
12.	Bryce Harper	Wahoos	252.2
13.	Trevor Story	Tigers	245.6
14.	Corey Seager	Senators	241.8
15.	DJ LeMahieu	Cubs	240.8
16.	Dansby Swanson	Blues	240.2
17.	Mike Yastrzemski	Senators	236.7
18.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Redbirds	231.5
19.	Brandon Lowe	Wahoos	228.8
20.	Wil Myers	Redbirds	226.3
21.	Nelson Cruz	Monarchs	224.5

22.	Cavan Biggio	Senators	221.1
23.	Anthony Rendon	Saints	218.3
24.	Xander Bogaerts	Skipjacks	213.5
	Kyle Seager	Bums	213.5

And now the top 25 pitchers for the season:

1.	Shane Bieber	Senators	376.0
2.	Yu Darvish	Monarchs	323.0
3.	Trevor Bauer	Monarchs	311.0
4.	Lance Lynn	Tigers	287.0
5.	Dinelson Lamet	Bear Devils	275.0
6.	Lucas Giolito	Bear Devils	256.0
7.	Aaron Nola	Senators	245.0
8.	Marco Gonzales	Bombers	242.0
	Brandon Woodruff	Cubs	242.0
10.	Hyun Jin Ryu	The Moe Szyslaks	235.0
11.	Carlos Carrasco	Senators	231.0
12.	Zach Davies	Senators	230.0
13.	Dylan Bundy	The Moe Szyslaks	226.0
14.	Framber Valdez	Saints	218.0
15.	Zach Plesac	Bear Devils	213.0
16.	Max Scherzer	Skipjacks	211.0
17.	Tyler Glasnow	The Moe Szyslaks	209.0
18.	Adam Wainwright	Redbirds	207.0
19.	Kevin Gausman	Bear Devils	190.0
20.	Sonny Gray	Cubs	188.0
21.	Antonio Senzatela	Senators	187.0
22.	Aaron Civale	Monarchs	174.0

23.	Dustin May	Redbirds	168.0
	Taijuan Walker	Bear Devils	168.0
25.	Julio Urías	Bear Devils	166.0

Skip will reserve his comments about the individual player totals for a future issue.

COURTHOUSE *DU JOUR*: PIERCE, NEBRASKA

With a wide-open day due to a last-minute cancellation of two depositions which would have spanned all of today, I made a game day decision to drive north on 275 to Pierce, Nebraska, for an in-person visit to the Pierce County Courthouse.¹ Pictured below, the Pierce County Courthouse was erected in the Year of Our Lord 1978, and whatever amount the architect, Everett J. Simpson, was paid on this project, he got away with highway robbery.



¹ Which I also tried to visit during my junket up to Niobrara in March, but was foiled on that excursion by COVID 19.



It would be hard to imagine a more plain or less distinctive courthouse than the one in Pierce, so if that was the goal, they should consider it achieved. I guess that even in architecture college, someone has to finish last in their class.

THE DRIVE WAS THE THING

Although the courthouse in Pierce² was less than exhilarating to visit and observe, the two-hour drive to and fro was nothing short of beautiful, what with the rolling farmland landscape in full autumnal splendor. Just the chance to admire the fall beauty, with the yellowing cornstalks, the changing tree colors, the amber waves of grain, and the fiery red sumac lacing the roadway, was reason enough for the drive. That and the chance to see all of the harvest equipment, combines and grain trucks alike, setting about to take care of their farmerly chores, and you've got a sundae with a cherry on top of it. Real, tangible, immersible beauty, a true delight in this increasingly virtual world.

Like I said, welcome to October!

PORTLAND MAVERICKS: THE BATTERED BASTARDS OF BASEBALL

Finally, acting on an Itchie tip from earlier this year, HQ and I took in this past week *The Battered Bastards of Baseball*, a wonderful documentary about the Portland Mavericks' baseball team of the 1970s and how it was founded by Bing Russell, father of child, adolescent and adult actor Kurt Russell. It's a fantastic baseball story, well told.

² Which, I know you're dying to know, was named after our country's 14th president, Franklin Pierce, who will very soon move up a notch in the all-time rankings of US presidents to next-to-last. Again, just FYI.



Just to whet your appetites a bit further, Bing Russell (left) was raised in the St. Petersburg, Florida area, and as a young boy he went to watch his beloved Yankees during Spring Training, and somehow became friendly with such Yankee dignitaries as Lou Gehrig and Lefty Gomez, who among others took a shine to the gregarious and unflappable lad. After his own efforts to become a professional baseball player ended short of the mark, Russell tried his hand at acting and became one of the most prolific bit actors of all time, appearing in scores and scores of spaghetti westerns and TV shows, including a thirteen-year stint as Deputy Clem Foster on *Bonanza*, one of the most inept law enforcers of all time. But in the autumn of his acting career, Russell became bored with his life as a thespian and yearned to return to his first and most fervent love, baseball.

When the Portland Beavers (a AAA club controlled by the Brewers) pulled up stakes and moved to the East Coast, Bing saw an opportunity and for 500 bucks obtained the rights to own a baseball team in Portland, and started his own independent team, the Portland Mavericks. Russell held open tryouts for players which brought in hundreds of has-beens and never-would-bes from all over the country, mostly players who were never drafted by professional baseball teams, or who were drafted and then quickly cut loose. The team Bing assembled was a ragtag assortment of renegades, castoffs and misfits that somehow figured out how to play some pretty good baseball together. Jim Boughton, who was blackballed from the Big Leagues after writing *Ball Four*, started his professional baseball comeback after sitting out six or seven seasons, and became their star pitcher. The owner's son, Kurt Russell, played part of a season with the team, in between his own acting gigs.



If memory serves, we were able to find *Battered Bastards* on Netflix. Thanks again to Big Johnny for recommending this terrific watch, which recommendation I hereby wholeheartedly pass along to the rest of you.

Nuff said. Have a great weekend.

Skipper