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Spring Training 1961, Tampa Bay

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

SEASON XXXVI



Angry no more.

FROM THE BULLPEN

2020 Campaign

Edition No. 22

October 30, 2020

Brethren:

Just for kicks and giggles, I asked Linda to prepare a listing of the players taken during the first five rounds of the 2020 Draft, and to detail their points for the season and their final rankings among all players. As you will see below, in this most unusual season, there were quite a few pleasant surprises but even more disappointments. As it turns out, yours truly the Skipper, wise old sea salt that he is, brilliantly picked the No. 1 player in the league in Shane Bieber during Round 3, the 28th overall player drafted. Brother Sunny¹, drafting in the 13-hole, picked the top overall hitter in Freddie Freeman, who notched a total of 330.2 points for the campaign. Bully picks.

Disappointments abound, but include Aaron Judge and Alex Bregman in the first round, Gleyber Torres, Jack Flaherty, Stephen Strasburg, J.D. Martinez, and Justin Verlander in the second round, and Austin Meadows, Mike Clevinger, Javier Báez, Kris Bryant and Jose Altuve in the third.

Somehow, our collective brain trust failed to draft in Rounds 1-5 Marcel Ozuna, fourth in overall points with 312, Trevor Bauer, fifth overall with 311 points, and Lance Lynn, who also finished in the Top Ten with 287 points. Three pretty big misses, fellas.

¹ No slouch himself.

**PLAYERS TAKEN IN FIRST FIVE ROUNDS OF 2020 DRAFT
SEASON'S POINTS, FINAL RANKINGS**

Round 1			Season's Points	Final Ranking
1.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Redbirds	231.5	35
2.	Cody Bellinger	Senators	191.3	82
3.	Gerrit Cole	Wahoos	287.0	11
4.	Christian Yelich	Monarchs	194.0	74
5.	Mookie Betts	Bums	256.3	19
6.	Max Scherzer	Skipjacks	211.0	56
7.	Aaron Judge	Bombers	116.10	293
8.	Jacob deGrom	Saints	284.0	12
9.	Mike Trout	Bear Devils	266.0	16
10.	Juan Soto	Cubs	262.0	17
11.	Nolan Arenado	Tigers	143.7	199
12.	Alex Bregman	Moe Szyslaks	139.7	208
13.	Freddie Freeman	Blues	330.2	2

Round 2			Season's Points	Final Ranking
1.	Walker Buehler	Blues	112.0	318
2.	Gleyber Torres	Moe Szyslaks	104.1	349
3.	Trevor Story	Tigers	245.6	24
4.	Francisco Lindor	Cubs	194.3	73
5.	Fernando Tatis Jr.	Bear Devils	288.6	8
6.	Jack Flaherty	Saints	117.0	291
7.	Stephen Strasburg	Bombers	-4.0	2671
8.	J.D. Martinez	Skipjacks	135.5	223
9.	Pete Alonso	Bums	192.4	78
10.	Justin Verlander	Monarchs	30.0	810
11.	Bryce Harper	Wahoos	252.2	22
12.	Rafael Devers	Senators	191.9	76
13.	José Ramírez	Redbirds	288.5	9

Round 3			Season's Points	Final Ranking
1.	Austin Meadows	Redbirds	89.0	437
2.	Shane Bieber	Senators	376.0	1
3.	George Springer	Wahoos	211.0	54
4.	Mike Clevinger	Monarchs	135.0	229
5.	Charlie Blackmon	Bums	200.4	68
6.	Xander Bogaerts	Skipjacks	213.5	48
7.	Trea Turner	Bombers	289.5	7
8.	Anthony Rendon	Saints	218.3	44
9.	Javier Báez	Bear Devils	123.9	264
10.	Clayton Kershaw	Cubs	234.0	34
11.	Kris Bryant	Tigers	81.5	483
12.	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	Moe Szyslaks	189.2	88
13.	Jose Altuve	Blues	124.1	260

Round 4			Season's Points	Final Ranking
1.	Chris Paddack	Blues	152.0	177
2.	Max Muncy	Moe Szyslaks	178.1	108
3.	Blake Snell	Tigers	154.0	166
4.	Giancarlo Stanton	Cubs	81.0	488
5.	Manny Machado	Bear Devils	278.0	14
6.	Ozzie Albies	Saints	106.0	337
7.	Charlie Morton	Bombers	84.0	466
8.	Zack Greinke	Skipjacks	187.0	94
9.	Keston Hiura	Bums	168.3	136
10.	Nelson Cruz	Monarchs	224.5	42
11.	Luis Castillo	Wahoos	216.0	46
12.	Aaron Nola	Senators	245.0	25
13.	Starling Marte	Redbirds	189.3	87

Round 5			Season's Points	Final Ranking
1.	Josh Hader	Redbirds	138.0	213
2.	Eugenio Suárez	Senators	188.0	91
3.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	186.8	95
4.	Yu Darvish	Monarchs	323.0	3
5.	Eloy Jiménez	Bums	205.0	66
6.	Ketel Marte	Skipjacks	125.3	252
7.	Paul Goldschmidt	Bombers	198.2	69
8.	Anthony Rizzo	Saints	171.9	126
9.	Lucas Giolito	Bear Devils	256.0	21
10.	José Abreu	Cubs	292.7	6
11.	Aroldis Chapman	Tigers	69.0	565
12.	Joey Gallo	Moe Szyslaks	138.8	211
13.	Yoán Moncada	Blues	153.1	169

DODGERS WIN SERIES

In an excellent World Series, the Dodgers prevailed on Tuesday night² over the Rays to take home their first World Series championship since 1988, providing the sweetest of moments for future Hall-of-Famer Clayton Kershaw. By picking up two of the Dodgers' wins with some superb pitching, Kershaw has decidedly gotten the postseason monkey off his back, and for my money, it couldn't have happened to a nicer guy.



As you all know, the Dodgers last won the World Series in 1988 over the Oakland A's and their Bash Brothers (McGwire and Canseco), and their supposedly unstoppable stopper, Dennis Eckersley. Which reminds me, just a couple of weeks ago I heard and watched Bob Costas recount the epic Kirk Gibson at-bat against Eckersley in Game One, as he masterfully described a pitch-by-pitch replay of one of my favorite moments in baseball history. Once again, as happens every single time that I watch it, I got chills down my spine when Gibson implausibly homered off Eck and then rounded the bases and did his emphatic victory motion with his right arm. How many of you remember the unforgettable words by Vin Skully which followed: *"In a year*

² Which I watched at a delightful outdoor bar in Coral Gables known as Fritz and Franz' Bierhaus, a rare Teutonic outpost near the heart of Cuban America.

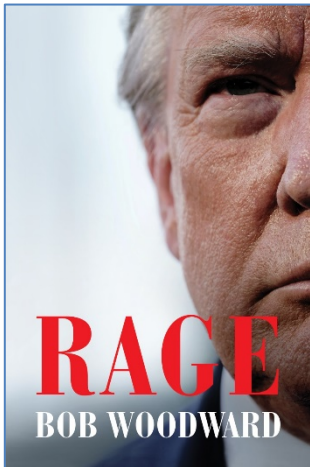
that has been so improbable, the impossible has happened." Again, chills, as I dictate this incredible call by the greatest announcer of all time.

Anyway, congrats to the Dodgers and Kershaw for ending many years of World Series disappointments. Well played.

BOOK REPORTS: *RAGE* and *LIAR'S CIRCUS*

In the fortnight runup to the election, I just finished reading two fascinating books centered on POTUS, *Rage* by Bob Woodward, and *Liar's Circus* by Carl Hoffman. A few comments on each are in order.

RAGE



Written by long-time presidential historian Bob Woodward, of *All the President's Men* fame, this book was a layup if ever there was one. Unhappy about Woodward's unvarnished coverage of him in *Fear*, published in September 2018, our Commander in Cheat instructed his minions to contact Woodward to volunteer for a series of recorded interviews for Woodward's next book.³ So certain that he would impress, dazzle and amaze Woodward with his incandescent brilliance and masterful command of the economy, foreign policy, social justice, geopolitics and all other things presidential, POTUS allowed himself⁴ to be questioned and recorded by Woodward on an entire range of issues, including as it presented itself, the COVID-19 pandemic. He didn't fare well.

Replete with quotes from former administration officials and cabinet members (i.e., Jim Mattis, Rex Tillerson, John Kelly and Dan Coats) demonstrating that at a minimum they had grave concerns about Trump's competency to occupy the Oval Office, the most damning accounts in the book are from the very lips of the subject of the book himself, all recorded, all knowingly and with his full permission and approval.

Perhaps the most interesting content in *Rage* is the account of POTUS's wooing of Kim Jong-Un and his attempt to denuclearize the Korean peninsula, a worthy goal to say the least, but foolhardy in its approach. POTUS truly seemed to believe that his overwhelming personality and matchless salesmanship⁵ abilities would be all that it took to win over the authoritarian dictator of North Korea to his way of thinking. Inexplicably, the supplicating POTUS turned over his entire collection of love letters with Kim to Woodward, many of which are reprinted in *Rage*, and they sound more like exchanges between two lovesick teenagers than serious communications between the Leader of the Free World and an authoritarian Head of State. Here's one example from the book:

³ This alone should make one seriously question Trump's judgment and hence fitness for office.

⁴ In fact, initiating many of the phone calls to Woodward himself. Talk about hoisting yourself on your own petard.

⁵ After all, he did have the famous ghostwritten book--*The Art of the Deal*--published in his name.

Letters between Trump and Kim following the Hanoi summit were cordial but infrequent. Their relationship got more attention than progress on denuclearization.

Trump did not write again until three weeks later, on March 22, in a letter in which he pledged permanent friendship. "Thank you again for making this long journey to Hanoi," he wrote. "As I said to you when we parted ways, you are my friend and always will be."

On June 10, Kim wrote Trump another letter of verbose flattery.

"Like the brief time we had together a year ago in Singapore, every minute we shared 103 days ago in Hanoi was also a moment of glory that remains a precious memory," Kim wrote. "Such a precious memory that I have in my unwavering respect for you will provide an impetus for me to take my steps when we walk toward each other again someday in the future.

"I also believe that the deep and special friendship between us will work as a magical force ...

"Your Excellency Mr. President, I still respect and lay my hopes on the will and determination that you showed in our first meeting to resolve the issue of our unique style that nobody had ever tried, and to write a new history. Today's reality is that without a new approach and the courage it takes, the prospects for resolution of the issue will only be bleak.

"I believe the one day will come sooner or later when we sit down together to make great things happen, with the will to give another chance to our mutual trust. Such a day should come again. It may well be recorded as yet another fantastic moment in history. "

Two days later, on June 12, Trump wrote back to say he would like to meet again.

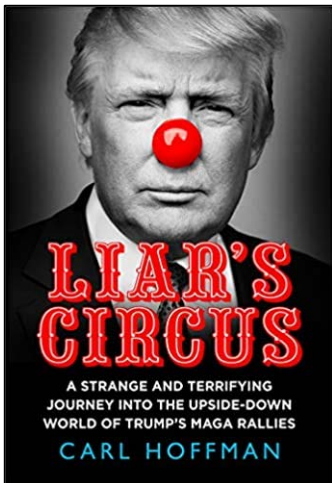
"It is hard to believe that a full year has passed since our historic first meeting in Singapore," Trump wrote. "It was on that day, one year ago, that you and I made a number of extraordinary commitments to one another--you committed to completely denuclearize, and I committed to provide security guarantees. We both committed to establish new relations for our two countries and to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean peninsula.

"I completely agree with you. You and I have a unique style and a special friendship. Only you and I, working together, can resolve the issues between our two countries and end nearly 70 years of hostility, bringing an era of prosperity to the Korean peninsula that will exceed all our greatest expectations--and you will be the one to lead. It will be historic!"

In the end, having (reportedly) never before weighed in on such a matter in this way--providing his own opinion about the fitness of an Oval Office occupant--Woodward ends his book with the following words:

When his performance as president is taken in its entirety, I can only reach one conclusion: Trump is the wrong man for the job.

LIAR'S CIRCUS⁶



I picked up this book at a book store in Seattle last Friday while shopping for John Bolton's book *The Room Where It Happened*. It is a glimpse into the so-called minds⁷ and souls⁸ of about ten or so members of the Trump base who are frequent flyers--practically groupies, if you will--at his political rallies. Author Carl Hoffman, who is an accomplished author but had not before written a political-themed book, decided to embed himself among a group of Rally Zealots for events in or near Minneapolis, Shreveport, Tupelo, MS, Lexington, KY, Hershey, PA, and other places, to try to figure out who these people are and what makes them tick. Truly fascinating, but even more so, truly frightening.⁹

You really have to read a book like this to believe it. Filled with many actual quotes from recorded conversations, it is hard to fathom where these people get their misguided views on the world. Clearly, it is not from reading actual newspapers--or God forbid, books!--or watching actual cable television. As described by Hoffman, the crazy conspiracy theories and troves of misinformation that you and I would discard out of hand, become the gospel truth to these committed rally-goers by virtue of Twitter-blasts, Facebook posts the QAnon website, and unverified and unchallenged words of mouth. And these are people whose votes count just as much as yours and mine. Again, frightening.

⁶ Subtitled: A Strange and Terrifying Journey Into the Upside-Down World of Trump's MAGA Rallies.

⁷ Most people would agree that these conspiracy-spouting lunatics should not even be allowed to hold driver's licenses, much less be allowed to vote. Clearly, they have been denied library cards at some juncture in their lives.

⁸ Although it seems questionable whether they have them.

⁹ These are the people who believe that Hillary Clinton runs a child sex-trafficking ring out of a pizza parlor in New York City, and that John Podesta drinks the blood of kidnapped children, for example. And so on, and so on, utter nonsense.)

WELCOME TO GREELEY

On a cheerier note, two weeks ago today I ventured to Grand Island for a meeting with a client and took advantage of this billable event to pay visits to courthouses in Fullerton (Nance County), St. Paul (Howard County), Greeley (Greeley County), and Albion (Boone County). On top of it being a beautiful fall day for a drive during harvest season, I most enjoyed my visit to the courthouse in Greeley, pictured below, which is quite impressive for a village of fewer than 1,000 people.



But the best part of this visit was getting to see the sign on the edge of Greeley as I entered the town:



That one cracked me up. Home to the Greeley Irish Festival which attracts some 2,000 people in September, this town is by appearances even more Irish than O'Neil, Nebraska.

THE END

Time to bring this issue of *From the Bullpen* to a conclusion. To all of my Hot Stove League amigos, have a fabulous Halloween weekend and for any of you who have not yet done so, remember next Tuesday to VOTE!¹⁰

Skipper



¹⁰ For Joe.