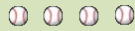


NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE



SEASON XXXVII



2020 HSL Champion
West Des Moines Cubs
Manager: Shamu



FROM THE BULLPEN

2021 Campaign

Edition No. 1

February 2, 2021

HAIL TO THE CUBS!

Gentlemen:

Happy New Year from *From the Bullpen*, and welcome to the first 2021 edition of the league organ. We hope that you like the new masthead, which was the inspiration of our reigning league champion, Charles Dwight "Shamu" a/k/a "Snickler" a/k/a "The Red Rocker" Sinclair, who now has a total of four Hot Stove League Championships under his grumbling boiler (1994*, 2007, 2009, 2020[☠]).

WINTER MEETING SCOTCHED

Sadly, for the first time in at least a quarter century, our annual January Winter Meeting did not take place due, of course, to the pandemic. Nobody was as heartsick about this as Shamu, who has been salivating over receiving The Cup from Jim Ed since October. Moreover, Shamu reportedly has been saving his shekels and was planning on treating us all to a celebratory repast of vittles and libations that would have made PAwesome's *Flemings' Fetes* and Jim Ed's *Pasta Amora Palatable Palaver* seem like grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup in the furnace room by comparison. Moreover, Shamu was reportedly secretly planning to give out custom-made Tommy Bahama shirts with the **Cubs'** logo to the twelve non-winning owners at the Winter Meeting, at 125 clams a copy, but had to put the kibosh on the special order in light of our meeting cancellation.¹

But how about this instead: What would everyone think about getting together for a Zoom meeting on **Friday, February 18, at 7 p.m.**? We could use this virtual gathering to congratulate Shamu on his championship; to have Jim Ed virtually pass The Cup over to Shamu,

¹ Fake News, but definitely SAD!

☠ COVID 19 shortened season.

freshly engraved; to discuss our upcoming 2021 Draft (tentatively set for Saturday, March 27) to review our choices of technology for conducting the Draft; and other subjects and topics that percolate to the surface during said session.


Please advise as to whether you are available for this Zoom meeting on February 18. And if you are not available, please advise as to your specific plans, so we can horn in on them with you instead of sitting around twiddling our thumbs, as per usual.

IF I HAD A HAMMER


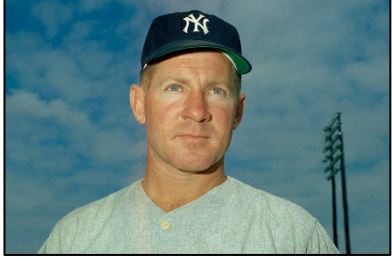
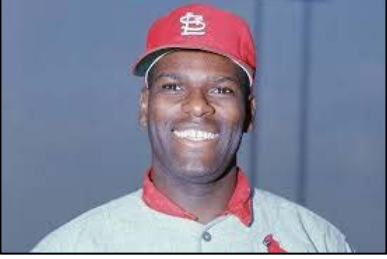


R.I.P. to one of baseball's greats, with the passing of the legendary "Hammerin' Hank" Aaron, the all-time major league leader in home runs.² Born in Mobile, Alabama, Aaron came up in the Negro Leagues, playing briefly (three months) for the Indianapolis Clowns, before being signed by the Braves organization and installed in a minor league outpost in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, with the Eau Claire Bears of the Class C Northwest League.

After being cured of his cross-handed batting grip, Aaron rose swiftly through the minor leagues before debuting with the Milwaukee Braves on April 13, 1954. By the time he retired some 23 years later in 1976, Aaron had surpassed the great Bambino and finished with 755 home runs; tallied 3771 hits, third all-time behind Rose and Cobb; knocked in 2297 runs (still ranked first in major league history, in spite of the steroid era!); and set a mark that will never be equaled with 6856 total bases, more than 700 more than the slacker who has the second-highest total, Stan Musial. Willie Mays has the third-most total bases with 6066. Even with a size 8+ noggin, fourth-place occupant Bonds could not even get to 6000 in total bases.

Losing Aaron to Heaven's Cooperstown is a blow, the ninth Hall of Famer to draw his final breath since the beginning of last year. Just look at this list of recently expiring Hall of Famers and their greatest baseball accomplishments:

<p>Hank Aaron (01/22/21)</p> 	<p>2297 RBIs, 6856 Total Bases, 1477 Career Extra Base Hits 25-time All-Star (1954-1974) World Series Champion (1957) NL MVP (1957)</p> <p>Northern League Rookie of the Year (1953) South Atlantic League MVP (1953) First-Ballot HOF (1982)</p>
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² Barry Bonds obviously doesn't count. The guy can't even get into the Hall of Fame. And bully for that.

<p>Lou Brock (09/06/20)</p> 	<p>3023 Hits (28th All-Time) 939 Stolen Bases (NL record) 900 RBIs 141 Triples 6-time All-Star 2-time World Series Champion (1964 and 1967) HOF (1985)</p>
<p>Whitey Ford (10/08/20)</p> 	<p>10-time All-Star 6-time World Series champion Cy Young/MVP Awards (1961) 263 Wins (Yankee career leader) 45 Shutouts HOF (1974)</p>
<p>Bob Gibson (10/02/20)</p> 	<p>251 Wins 3117 Strikeouts 255 Complete Games 56 Shutouts 9 Gold Glove Awards 2 Cy Young Awards (1968 and 1970) 1 MVP Award (1968) HOF (1981)</p>
<p>Al Kaline (04/06/20)</p> 	<p>3007 Hits 399 Home Runs 1583 RBIs 18-time All-Star 10 Gold Glove Awards 1 World Series Championship (1968) HOF (1980)</p>
<p>Tommy Lasorda (01/07/21)</p> 	<p>W/L record as pitcher 0-4 ERA 6.48 Managerial Record: 1599-1439 2-time World Series Champion (1981, 1988) 2-time Manager of the Year (1983, 1988) HOF (1997)</p>

<p>Joe Morgan (10/11/20)</p> 	<p>World Series Championships (1975 and 1976) NL MVP (1975 and 1976) 2517 Hits 268 Home Runs 1133 RBIs 689 Stolen Bases HOF (1990)</p>
<p>Tom Seaver (08/31/20)</p> 	<p>311 Career Wins 2.86 Career ERA 3640 Strikeouts (6th Overall) 1967 Rookie-of-the-Year 12-Time All-Star 3 Cy Young Awards (1969, 1973, 1975) World Series Champion (1969) HOF (1992)</p>
<p>Don Sutton (01/18/21)</p> 	<p>324 Career Wins 58 Shutouts 3574 Strikeouts (7th overall) 4-Time All-Star HOF (1998)</p>

Some great, great players--the best of their generation.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, J.T.

Please join *From the Bullpen* in wishing our brother J.T. "Itchie" Thielen a Happy Birthday. As you all know, Itchie lost his own Hall of Famer last month with the passing of his mom, "Magic Marge" Thielen, who, like her son, reportedly never met a basketball shot that she didn't like. R.I.P., Magic Marge.



Marge Thielen

THE HALL OF FAME: IT'S NOT FOR EVERYBODY

I'm sure you all have seen the results of this year's HOF voting by the sportswriters, and the outcome of 0 new inductees being selected for the class of 2021. An outraged Curt Schilling has reportedly asked to be taken off the ballot for future votes. Good riddance, sayeth I. Both Bonds and Clemens, in their ninth and next-to-last years of eligibility, came up short. The steroid era continues to leave its stain.

Bottom line: The Hall of Fame isn't for everyone. Even the best of the worst PED abusers are getting their just desserts.³

SKIP'S TIP: WATCH KEN BURNS' DOCUMENTARY "BASEBALL"

While channel-surfing the other night, we came across the epic Ken Burns documentary "Baseball" and watched whatever episode it is that featured the great Sandy Koufax. It was so delectably good that we decided to buy the entire series to watch online, beginning with Volume 1 on Saturday morning last.

The first volume of "Baseball" begins with a terrific quote from Walt Whitman⁴, and takes us from the origins of the game in the late 1700s up through the end of the 19th century. It debunks the myth that baseball was invented out of whole cloth in 1839 by Abner Doubleday in Cooperstown, New York, and eloquently retells the story of the first "official" baseball game at Elysian Fields in Hoboken, New Jersey, on June 19, 1846. It recounts the formation and

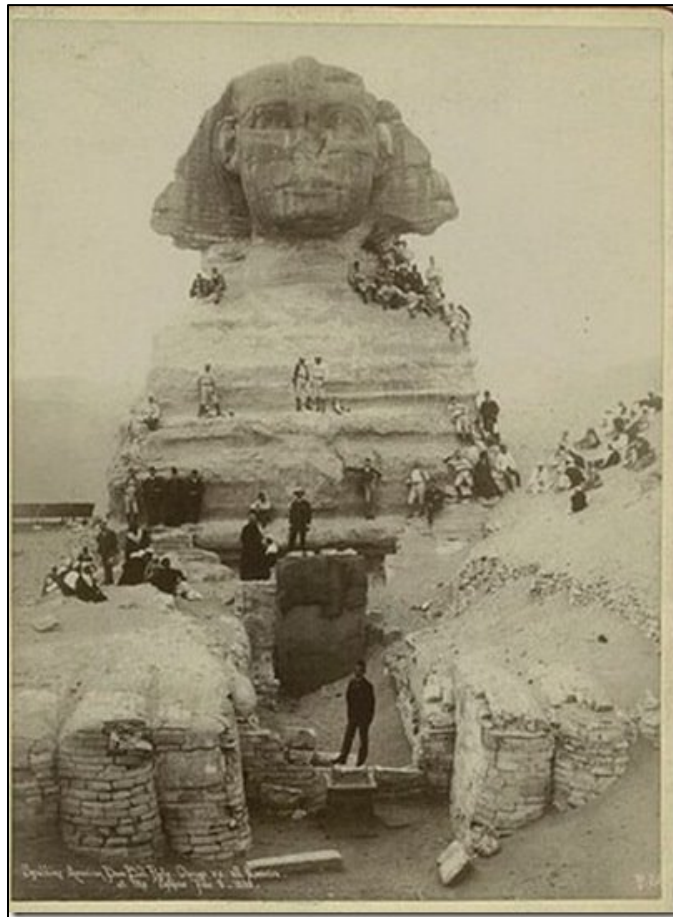
³ As an aside, I can hardly believe that PAwesome didn't take the bait when Underbelly threw out a line with a chubby worm on it last week. I guess PAwesome was too busy shorting or non-shorting his clients' positions in GameStop to give us all an earful.

⁴ *I see great things in baseball. It's our game--the American game. It will take our people out-of-doors, fill them with oxygen, give them a longer physical stoicism. Tend to relieve us from being a nervous, dyspeptic set. Repair these losses, and be a blessing to us.*

history of the first professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, and describes the evolution of the game into its current form, and the development of the all-important box score.

Burns gives special attention to Nebraska and its native son, Wahoo Sam Crawford, who formed one of the first barnstorming teams, quoting Wahoo Sam describing how they went from town to town across the central plains in horse-drawn wagons, playing every small town team that was bold enough to face them.

I particularly enjoyed Burns' coverage of A.G.⁵ Spalding, who went from being a baseball superstar to the biggest sporting goods magnate in the country. To promote himself and his business, Spalding led a cadre of major leaguers on a worldwide trip in 1880 trying to sell the globe on America's pastime. There is a marvelous picture of about 25 uniformed, mostly-mustachioed men, on and around the sphinx in Cairo.



As you may or may not remember, "Baseball" is narrated by former news anchor John Chancellor, whose voice rings with authority and credibility. Inning (Volume) 1 included interviews with Bob Costas, who looked like he was about 18 years old at the time; with my treasured Roger Angell, who would have been in his 70's in 1994, but looked and sounded much younger

⁵ Alexander Goodwill, a great name for a heroic figure.

to me; with the late, beloved Buck O'Neill, who comes across as someone's very sweet grandfather; with Tom Boswell of the Washington Post, another of my favorite baseball writers; and with a very haughty George Plimpton who, dare I say, comes across as a rather insufferable snob.

I found myself misty-eyed and blanketed in nostalgia as I reveled in rewatching this marvelous first volume of Mr. Burns' epic work. If you are looking for a way to fill some of your time--and who isn't, during this seemingly interminable pandemic--I highly recommend that you tune in to "Baseball."

And that's a wrap, kids. I hope you have enjoyed the first 2021 Edition of *From the Bullpen*.

Skipper