

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

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SEASON XXXVII



2020 HSL Champion
West Des Moines Cubs
Manager: Shamu

400

FROM THE BULLPEN

2021 Campaign

Edition No. 17

August 11, 2021

SAINTS SOAR; CUBS CLIMB

Brethren:

The story of Week 18 in the Hot Stove League was the seismic and some would say angelic rise of the **Saints** to the second spot in the standings. Riding the arms of Tyler Mahle (40.0), Dylan Bundy (33.0), Ross Stripling (33.0), Kevin Gausman (32.0) and Stephen Matz (32.0), the **Saints** accumulated a whopping total of 578.4 points for the week, and are now just 266.9 points behind the **Bums**. Not far behind are the **Cubs**, who parlayed a 527.3-point week for a rise to third place in the standings, just 378 points behind the **Bums**.

At the other end of the spectrum, the **Wahoos** had a league-worst total of 383.3 points and dropped into seventh place, while the **Monarchs** could muster just 395.0 points for the week.

And also worth mentioning is that the **Blues**, even as their manager was off mountain climbing in Wyoming, boasted the third best total for the week at 483.9 points, meaning that Sunny's team is still in the cellar, but at least now within striking distance of my own moribund **Sen-ators** who, by all appearances, have given up the ghost.

**HSL STANDINGS THRU WEEK 18
ENDING AUGUST 8, 2021**

Rank	Team	Points	Pts Back
1	Bums	8855.0	-
2	Saints	8578.1	276.9
3	Cubs	8477.0	378.0
4	Skipjacks	8439.0	416.0
5	Bombers	8268.3	586.7
6	Redbirds	7996.9	858.1
7	Wahoos	7958.2	896.8
8	Monarchs	7942.3	912.7
9	Tigers	7874.9	980.1
10	Tribe	7831.7	1023.3
11	Bears	7808.9	1046.1
12	Senators	7546.4	1308.6
13	Blues	7244.1	1610.9

POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 18

Rank	Team	
1	Saints	578.4
2	Cubs	527.3
3	Blues	483.9
4	Bums	474.0
5	Skipjacks	465.7
6	Tigers	464.2
7	Tribe	439.7
8	Bombers	420.5
9	Redbirds	410.5
10	Senators	405.2
11	Bears	400.3
12	Monarchs	395.0
13	Wahoos	383.3

TOP 25 PITCHERS

1.	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	594.0
2.	Zack Wheeler	Wahoos	568.0
3.	Brandon Woodruff	Redbirds	522.0
4.	Kevin Gausman	Saints	518.0
5.	Chris Bassitt	Tribe	502.0
6.	Gerrit Cole	Bums	493.0
7.	Robbie Ray	Tribe	484.0
8.	Freddy Peralta	Senators	475.0
9.	Max Scherzer	Tigers	470.0
10.	Jacob deGrom	Wahoos	465.0
11.	Julio Urías	Tigers	457.0
12.	Lance Lynn	Bums	446.0
13.	Corbin Burnes	Redbirds	444.0
14.	Carlos Rodón	Bums	440.0
15.	Germán Márquez	Tigers	437.0
16.	Adam Wainwright	Monarchs	434.0
17.	Charlie Morton	Cubs	433.0
18.	Yu Darvish	Blues	429.0
19.	José Berríos	Blues	422.0
20.	Trevor Bauer	Tribe	417.0
21.	Anthony DeSclafani	Bombers	412.0
22.	Joe Musgrove	Bums	412.0
23.	Kyle Hendricks	Wahoos	410.0
24.	Sean Manaea	Skipjacks	405.0
25.	Kyle Gibson	Monarchs	404.0

WHO'S HOT - PITCHING

1.	Zack Wheeler	Wahoos	66.0
2.	Blake Snell	Blues	60.0
3.	Max Fried	Cubs	59.0
4.	Dylan Cease	Tribe	58.0
5.	Madison Bumgarner	Senators	47.0
	Jorge López	Bombers	47.0
7.	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	45.0
8.	Robbie Ray	Tribe	42.0
9.	Yusei Kikuchi	Redbirds	41.0
10.	Cal Quantrill	Wahoos	40.0
	Eli Morgan	Bears	40.0
	Tyler Mahle	Saints	40.0
13.	Luis Garcia	Bombers	37.0
14.	Chris Flexen	Tribe	35.0
	Austin Gomber	Bombers	35.0
	Germán Márquez	Tigers	35.0
17.	Max Scherzer	Tigers	34.0
18.	Dylan Bundy	Saints	33.0
	Ross Stripling	Saints	33.0
	Kyle Freeland	Bombers	33.0
21.	Kevin Gausman	Saints	32.0
	Lance McCullers Jr.	Redbirds	32.0
	Yu Darvish	Blues	32.0
	Steven Matz	Saints	32.0
25.	Wade Miley	Senators	31.0

WHO'S NOT - PITCHING

1.	Zach Davies	Redbirds	-24.0
2.	Sandy Alcantara	Wahoos	-22.0
3.	Michael Wacha	Saints	-12.0
	Ryan Weathers	Saints	-12.0
5.	Jake Odorizzi	Bears	-11.0
	Caleb Smith	Wahoos	-11.0
7.	Matt Manning	Bears	-9.0
8.	Lucas Giolito	Bears	-8.0
	Nathan Eovaldi	Bombers	-8.0
10.	Martín Pérez	Blues	-6.0
11.	Paolo Espino	Senators	-5.0
12.	Jon Lester	Senators	-4.0
	Brad Keller	Monarchs	-4.0
14.	Spencer Howard	Bombers	-3.0
	Erick Fedde	Blues	-3.0
	Zach Plesac	Skipjacks	-3.0
	Sean Manaea	Skipjacks	-3.0
18.	Reid Detmers	Senators	-1.0

TOP 25 HITTERS

1.	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	Blues	550.0
2.	Shohei Ohtani (Batter)	Skipjacks	494.1
3.	Marcus Semien	Monarchs	467.1
4.	Jesse Winker	Bums	462.4
5.	Matt Olson	Monarchs	459.3
6.	Freddie Freeman	Monarchs	457.4
7.	Rafael Devers	Saints	455.7
8.	Fernando Tatis Jr.	Bears	447.8
9.	Bo Bichette	Skipjacks	438.3
10.	Cedric Mullins	Bums	430.9
11.	Jose Altuve	Bums	429.8
	Bryan Reynolds	Bears	429.8
13.	Manny Machado	Bums	427.1
14.	Chris Taylor	Saints	422.4
15.	J.D. Martinez	Blues	420.3
16.	Austin Riley	Bears	418.8
17.	Trea Turner	Bums	416.8

18.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	416.5
19.	Juan Soto	Redbirds	415.2
20.	Max Muncy	Wahoos	414.1
21.	Xander Bogaerts	Senators	405.0
22.	Jake Cronenworth	Skipjacks	403.4
23.	Justin Turner	Wahoos	398.1
24.	Carlos Correa	Bombers	397.0
25.	Bryce Harper	Saints	396.8

WHO'S HOT - HITTING
(through 08/10/21)

1.	C.J. Cron	Redbirds	55.3
2.	Eloy Jiménez	Saints	48.5
3.	George Springer	Saints	42.5
4.	Jesse Winker	Bums	42.0
5.	Brandon Lowe	Tribe	40.4
6.	Brandon Belt	Wahoos	38.6
7.	Trevor Story	Cubs	38.6
8.	Trent Grisham	Cubs	38.5
9.	José Abreu	Cubs	37.7
10.	Joey Votto	Tigers	37.6
11.	Adam Duvall	Wahoos	36.6
12.	Salvador Perez	Cubs	36.3
13.	Jonathan India	Blues	35.7
14.	Jorge Polanco	Saints	34.8
15.	Marcus Semien	Monarchs	33.2
16.	Bryce Harper	Saints	33.0
17.	Lewis Brinson	Cubs	32.0
18.	Jonathan Schoop	Cubs	31.4
19.	Dansby Swanson	Tribe	30.9
20.	Starling Marte	Bombers	30.5
21.	Amed Rosario	Cubs	30.1
22.	Bryan Reynolds	Bears	30.0
23.	José Ramírez	Cubs	29.9
24.	Jesús Aguilar	Cubs	29.7
25.	Matt Olson	Monarchs	29.6

WHO'S NOT - HITTING
(through 08/10/21)

1.	Andy Ibáñez	Bears	-5.2
2.	Wilmer Flores	Tigers	-2.9
3.	Jake Fraley	Bums	-2.5
4.	Daulton Varsho	Bums	-2.0
5.	Josh Rojas	Redbirds	-1.7
6.	Christian Yelich	Saints	-1.0

SKIP SEZ



The **Bums** look untouchable. Not only do they have four pitchers in the top 25 moundsmen (Gerrit Cole, Lance Lynn, Carlos Rodón, and Joe Musgrove), but they also have five of the top 25 hitters (Jesse Winker, Cedric Mullins, José Altuve, Manny Machado and Trea Turner). That is depth with a capital D.



With virtually the entire **Senators** team either out for the season or on the perpetually-injured list, my squad has only one pitcher (Freddy Peralta) in the top 25 of all pitchers, and two hitters (Ozzie Albies and Xander Bogaerts) in the top 25 list of batters. Next season can't get here fast enough.

ON THE LINKS WITH ALPHA DOG

I recently spent some time on the golf course with Brother Itchie, first at the Senior Open at the Omaha Country Club, and next as his golf partner in the annual Red Man Tournament at Johnny Goodman. I noticed some alarming changes in his behavior that I feel are worthy of passing along.

First, on the Sunday of the last day of the Senior Open, I received an unsolicited late-morning text from J.T. which simply said, "We're going to the Senior Open today. I'll pick you up in 20 minutes. Be waiting outside when I get there, and wear something that doesn't embarrass me." While I was a bit put off by the tone of his *demand*--as opposed to a polite invite--I was fortunately available to go with J.T. to this event, and so I put on my best polo shirt and was waiting outside when Itchie picked me up.

As he pulled into my driveway, his passenger window lowered by about an inch and J.T. brusquely ordered, "Grab me two beers from the fridge, and make it snappy." Obeying his command, I got into the passenger seat with the cold beers as J.T. barked, "Buckle yourself in, open up one of those beers, and put it in a koozie for me. Now." And that's pretty much how the rest of the day went.

Once out at OCC, J.T. parked us in the green lot, and we proceeded inside to watch the final day of the Senior Open.



As soon as we were in the gate, I saw Freddie Couples hitting some balls off the practice tee and wanted to stop and watch him for a while, but J.T. wouldn't have it. "No. We're going to follow Colin Montgomerie around, so fall in and keep up with me."



Skipper and Alpha Dog set up to watch Colin tee off.

For some reason, J.T. seems to have a man crush on the arrogant and bloated Scottish has-been, perhaps because Colin is packing a few pounds more¹ than J.T. these days. Anyway, we followed along and watched Montgomerie as J.T. demanded, and after his tee shot on a par 3 badly missed the green, J.T. instructed me to "tell Colin he needs to mix in a salad now and then," and when I balked at this, Itchie followed up with a stern, "Say it. Now!" When I declined to do so--fearing expulsion from the course--J.T. barked, "Then go get me a cold beer, and a sandwich. ASAP!" Which I did.

¹ But only a few.



Alpha Dog's Idol

So while it was pretty neat to see some of the top golfers of our generation,² it was at the price of being barked at and bade to by an unusually demanding Itchie, whose sour mood I later learned was because he was shunned by the powers-that-be at *Bridges Trust*, who not only left him off the guest list for their luxury box behind the green at Hole No. 14, but also turned him away when he tried to crash the party for some free cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.

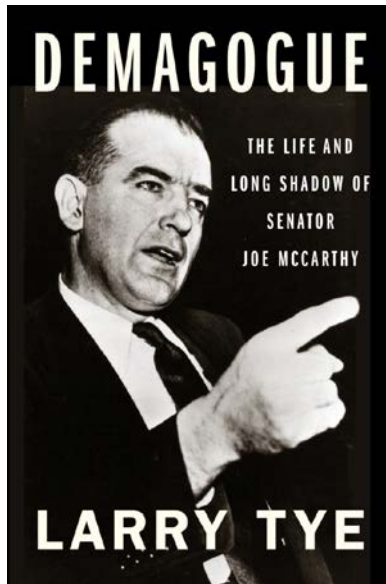
I was more or less ready to write off my Senior Open Sunday with Itchie as a fluke--just a grumpy old retiree having a bad day--but then the very next Saturday when we teamed up for the Red Man, there was more of this startling behavior. Just as soon as we were loading our clubs onto our cart, Itchie commanded, "Put your clubs in the right side, I'm driving!" (*Okay, fine, I thought, he pretty much always does drive when we golf together, no big deal.*) But then no sooner were the clubs in the cart when Itchie demanded that I "go inside and get me a cocktail and a Danish, and make it a double, on the double, got it?"

And that's pretty much how the entire round went, Itchie bossing me around, telling me what club to use, where to hit my shots, when to throw him a ball, when to grab him some tees, when to freshen his drink, etc., etc. Before long it occurred to me that Brother Itchie should now be referred to as *Alpha Dog*, a new persona for him which no doubt has now surfaced because he has been retired for a few years, is of independent means, and has grown used to getting whatever he wants, whenever he wants it.

² Including Jim Furyk, who won the tournament; Ernie Els; Freddie Couples; Vijay Singh; Rocco Mediate; and Miguel Angel Jiménez.

I'm not saying he's no longer fun to be around, but just be forewarned, if you're going to run with Itchie's pack, be prepared for complete and total subservience to the Alpha Dog.

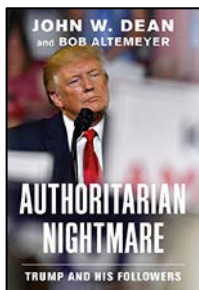
BOOK REPORT:
DEMAGOGUE: The Life and Long Shadow
of Senator Joe McCarthy
By Larry Tye



I just finished reading the third book³ from the wonderful little bookstore in Montpelier where I picked up *The Bomber Mafia*, *DEMAGOGUE: The Life and Long Shadow of Senator Joe McCarthy*, written by Larry Tye, a new author to me. It is a terrific read about the junior senator from Wisconsin who flamed out just as quickly as he rose to prominence as a red-baiting progenitor of McCarthyism during the early days of the Cold War.

An enigma for the ages, McCarthy was born in the small village of Grand Chute near Appleton, Wisconsin, and quit school at a young age to found and operate his own chicken farm. While initially successful, McCarthy's operation eventually failed and he then returned to school, finishing four years of high school in one year. He then attended Marquette University in Milwaukee, where he earned his undergraduate and law degrees, and then hung out his own shingle for a spell while dipping his toes into the political waters, first as a Democrat, and then as a Republican.

After having limited success in private practice, McCarthy ran for a district judgeship and beat out a long-time incumbent, and then used his judgeship to advance his political career as he took an early aim at the position of U.S. senator. When the United States entered World War II, McCarthy was able to win a commission as an officer in the Marines--although he later lied repeatedly about this, and claimed to have entered the service as a non-commissioned buck private. Even though his time in the Pacific Theater was almost entirely in a safe and non-



³ The first book from that triumvirate was *Authoritarian Nightmare: Trump and his followers*, by John Dean and Bob Altemeyer, which was such an amateurish hatchet job on POTUS 45 that it's not even worth wasting time on. For someone who was intelligent enough to rise to the position of White House counsel for Nixon, Dean can't write for beans. I guess Tricky Dick was right: Dean really is a weasel. Give me facts, not rank opinions.

arduous desk job, McCarthy used his cunning and his natural-born gift of self-promotion to create the nickname and image of himself as *Tail-Gunner Joe*.⁴

While still a Wisconsin state court judge, and while still in the active service of the military, McCarthy unabashedly violated the canons of ethics of both professions by actively running for the United States Senate. While he lost his first attempt at statewide office, McCarthy eventually prevailed and became the “junior senator from Wisconsin” in 1947. From this perch, his reign of terror began with a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950, when he fabricated out of whole cloth the lie that he had in his briefcase a list of some 205 names of card-carrying Communists who allegedly were employed in the State Department, unleashing an unprecedented era of anti-Pinko Fever.



Joseph Welch

The rest is recorded in the history books. McCarthy became the chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, which included a Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. He began holding hearings, some public and some in private, wherein he and his top henchman, Roy Cohn, bullied, badgered and beleaguered hundreds of subpoenaed witnesses in his manic quest to root out Communism. Although it was almost universally agreed that McCarthy was charming, giving and even kind in his personal dealings with people, he was ruthless and cruel without surcease while browbeating witnesses in the subcommittee hearings. Many people believe that the tipping point of his campaign of terror was when he was attacking a young lawyer in the law firm of Joseph Welch⁵ of Boston, who represented the Army in the subcommittee proceedings, leading Welch to utter the now-famous lines:

"Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness." When McCarthy tried to continue his attack, Welch angrily interrupted, "Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. *You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?*"⁶

After his attack on the Army backfired, and with one of the most popular presidents of all time, Ike, determined to see him toppled from power, McCarthy's popularity plummeted and his fear-mongering no longer had any bite. Other senators avoided him like the plague, as did many of his former friends and associates, and he spiraled deeper and deeper into the

⁴ Even though he was never a true member of any bomber or fighter squadron, McCarthy used his rank to wrangle his way on board a bomber plane where he was allowed to fire off a few rounds from the craft's tail gunner position, which he somehow parlayed into receiving a few combat medals. He later requested letters from some of the crew members to fight claims that he fabricated and/or greatly exaggerated his war time combat service in the Pacific.

⁵ Welch, who later in life played the judge in one of my top five movies of all time, *Anatomy of a Murder*, where he calls "balls and strikes" in the fabulous courtroom scenes between George C. Scott as prosecuting attorney Claude Dancer and Jimmy Stewart as Ben Gazzara's defense lawyer, Paul Biegler. If you haven't seen this movie, I absolutely insist that you watch it, for your own good.

⁶ Some heretics have speculated that Welch cooked up this line ahead of time, and then just waited for McCarthy to blunder into his trap. I refuse to believe this.

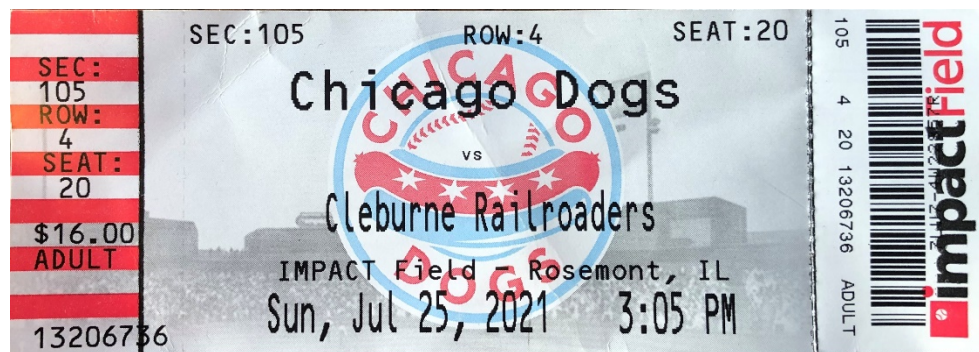
depths of alcoholism, consuming a fifth of bourbon or more a day at the end. He died at the age of 48 while hospitalized at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, on May 2, 1957, officially from acute hepatitis, although many of his cult members believed that he was poisoned by a Russian operative or suffered some other tragic end at the hands of the Com-mies.

Besides leaving behind the stench of McCarthyism, the junior senator from Wisconsin left behind his chief acolyte, Roy Cohn, who taught McCarthy's brand of fear-mongering and intimidation to others, including his star pupil, POTUS 45. According to Tye's book, Cohn taught Trump how to use lies, intimidation and counterattacks in any and all of his business dealings in the cutthroat Manhattan real estate market, which tactics also informed his later political campaigns as well as his tenure in the Oval Office. Indeed, much of The Donald's playbook seems like it was written by McCarthy: Lie, deny, lie some more, make up unflattering nick-names for all your opponents, bully, belittle and, most importantly, double down when attacked, and make sure the counterattack is tenfold the original volley.

Also, like POTUS 45, McCarthy had an extremely loyal base that absolutely adored him, and stuck with him until the bitter end, the same sort of phenomena that we are seeing now. Many would say, and have said, that Trumpism is the new McCarthyism. If you want to have an informed opinion of this, let me know and I will loan you the book.

HOBSON'S CHOICE, REVISITED

A fortnight ago on my way to visit Woodstock,⁷ I stopped in to catch a Sunday afternoon baseball game between the Chicago Dogs and the Cleburne Railroaders at Impact Field



in Rosemont, Illinois, a stone's throw from O'Hare Airport, and who do you suppose was managing the Dogs⁸ but our old friend Butch Hobson. You may recall, if you actually read this scandal sheet, that we last caught up with Butch when he was piloting the visiting Kane County Cougars in a game I caught in Burlington, Iowa, on August 8, 2017. (For those of you thirsting to reread the earlier account of Butch and how he ended up managing in the A Level Midwest League, see former Bullpen Edition No. 26, 08/24/17.) In his third year at the helm of the Chicago Dogs franchise, Hobson is now 70 years old and cheering on mostly 20-23 year olds from his third base coaching box.

⁷ Illinois, not New York.

⁸ Who play in the same Independent American Association League as the Lincoln Saltdogs.



Butch at 70



Impact Field: Home of the Dogs

My only conclusion is that Butch must have drank, smoked or snorted every paycheck that he ever earned⁹ and is working because he needs the dough; or because he has an unsurpassed love of the game, and would rather be in his third base coaching box than any other spot in the universe. Or maybe it's just because he gets to coach his own son, 30-year-old K.C. Hobson, who only made it to the AA level of the minor leagues and no higher, but is currently a starting every-day player for Papa Hobson.

If his performance on that Sunday afternoon is any indication, Hobson the Younger not only fell short of the necessary talent to make it to the Show, but also the temperament. He went 0-for-5 on the day with two strikeouts, one called and one swinging, and after each of the K's he flung his bat like 15 to 20 feet in disgust, glaring back at the umpire after the called strike 3 in his first at bat. Based on that very small sample size, I suspect that he is not wildly popular with his teammates, or the fans.

It was nice to catch up with Butch. We'll check back in on him in a couple of years.

HOT STOVE LEAGUE REIGNS SUPREME

If any of the rest of you Stegosauruses still regularly read the Omaha World-Herald like me, then you may have seen the article in the Sunday paper by a guy named Bob Marks on May 2, 2021. In the article, repeated below, Marks indicated that he has participated in a fantasy baseball league that has operated continuously since 1986, and he inquired of his readership if anyone could boast of a longer continuous, uninterrupted tenure as a baseball fantasy league. **Turns out, it's just us!**

Anyway, I thought you would enjoy my back-then and more-recent exchange of correspondence with Mr. Marks:

ORIGINAL OWH ARTICLE

Omaha History Detective: Sports records set in Omaha, including a 444-yard hole-in-one

Bob Marks
May 2, 2021

Setting records in any sport is exciting, and it's big business for those who keep track and publish them. Guinness currently has more than 40,000 world records in its database, which is actually more than the kinds of beer it makes. In this column I'm looking for sports records which were set on Omaha soil (or water).

I'm starting with one which produced a lot of disbelief in the record-conscious world of golf. However, Golf Digest has investigated and verified that the world-record

⁹ His top major league salary was \$40,000 in 1977, when he cracked the 100-RBI mark at age 25.

longest hole-in-one was plunked in at west Omaha's Miracle Hill Golf Course on Oct. 7, 1965, by Bob Mitera, a Creighton University golfer who was 21 at the time.

He holed out on the par 4 No. 10 (today's No. 1). The fairway was straight-away 275 yards to a crest with a drop-off toward the hole — 444 yards from the tee box! Apparently there was a robust, friendly wind that day and the fairway was hard as rock. Mitera's playing partner also drove the green and ended up beyond the hole.

Mitera has been reticent to talk about the record, feeling that his veracity about it has been unjustly questioned. We believe you, Bob! Whether his record has been broken is shrouded in controversy, but if you ask Phil Palmer, general manager at Miracle Hill, it still stands.

Omaha miraculously earned the right to host the 2008 U.S. Olympic Swimming Trials. It was a miracle because we didn't have a pool facility that met the requirements of such a meet, so one was built in Omaha's convention center arena.

During the June-July event, nine swimming world records were set or tied. In the women's 100-meter backstroke event, two of them were set and broken in the space of two days, so that at the end of the 2008 event, Omaha's makeshift pool owned seven world records in swimming.

No surprise that none of them stands today, but for eight days in the summer of 2008, Omaha put on one of the great swimming events in history. And since 2008, the Olympic Trials have continued to be awarded to Omaha, including 2021's delayed trials scheduled to begin June 13.

Another notable record was set in Omaha's convention center, though not on water. The University of Nebraska women's volleyball team has consistently led the sport in attendance since the Bob Devaney Center in Lincoln was turned into a volleyball venue in 2013.

When the Huskers qualified for the 2015 NCAA championship match in Omaha, a sell-out was guaranteed. Nebraskans dig their volleyball, and an NCAA record crowd of 17,561 took every seat in the house on Dec. 19, 2015.

That night Nebraska corralled the Texas Longhorn women in three straight sets and Omaha showed the NCAA that top-notch college volleyball could fill large arenas.

With a larger capacity, Kansas City's Sprint Center eclipsed the Omaha attendance record in the 2017 championship game, also won by Nebraska. Omaha didn't have a chance to regain the record in the recent 2020 championships because of COVID-19 crowd restrictions.

Of course, the U.S. collegiate record is nowhere near a world record. Some 95,000 fanatics watched a volleyball match between Brazil and Russia in Rio de Janeiro in 1983.

Glen Gorbous was a professional baseball player with a cannon for an arm, and a Popsicle stick for a bat.

In the latter respect, he resembled his fellow Cardinals on Omaha's 1957 American Association team. But Gorbous proved he could throw when, on the night of Aug. 1,

1957, he flung a standard baseball 445 feet, 10 inches in Omaha's Rosenblatt Stadium. It was a world record which stands to this day.

He did it in an exhibition in which he was allowed a six-step running start, and threw from the right field corner of Rosenblatt across the diamond to the left field corner. My guess is that since then no professional baseball player has wanted to risk his shoulder socket in a similar exhibition. By way of comparison, the world record for the javelin throw, an Olympic event, is about 323 feet.

The above Omaha baseball highlight was brought to my attention through my participation in a fantasy baseball league, our own UBL (Ultimate Baseball League). In the fantasy version of baseball, a number of "managers" form a league and select flesh-and-blood players whose real-life statistics are credited to their make-believe teams.

It is estimated that more than 25 million Americans stay fit playing fantasy baseball. Most leagues use game designs and scoring systems devised by the first "Rotisserie" league in 1980, and use vendors like CBS Sports to keep their statistics and determine the winning managers.

Not in the UBL! Our unique game was invented, brought to life and nurtured in its infancy by three of my former colleagues at Mutual of Omaha: Mike Raabe, Rob Copenhagenaver and the late Ron Wheeler. (They always believed that a bad day at the ballpark was better than a good day at work.)

I bring up the UBL because I believe it must have achieved a record for the longevity of a fantasy league which has operated independently of any outside commercial influence or canned game design.



Our rules originated and are strictly maintained by our Executive Committee, which at present consists of Mike Raabe, the UBL Commissioner. Over 36 seasons, through sick (COVID-19) and sin (steroids), we have continued to play ball without interruption. Every inning of every MLB regular season ballgame from 1986 to date in 2021 has been taken into account in determining our champions.

Three of today's 10 managers are original 1986 members, and another three have at least 34 years chalked up. In its long history, 24 different Omahans have fielded teams. I am eager to hear of any fantasy baseball organization that invented itself and has a longer record of service in its community than Omaha's own Ultimate Baseball League.

DDE'S MAY 2, 2021 RESPONSE:

Mr. Marks

I enjoyed your column on Sunday, and have enjoyed other historical columns you have published.

Since you asked, and for that reason only, I was one of the four founding members of the Omaha-based Hot Stove League (herein "the HSL") which began competition in 1985 and has operated continuously to the present day. Four of us who went to law

school together at the University of Nebraska College of Law– all rabid baseball fans –not sufficiently challenged with the rigors of the practice of law, decided to form our own league and set up our own rules and points scoring system beginning in the spring of that year.

After our initial draft at my then utilitarian townhouse (some league doubters question the accuracy of this location, but take my word for it, I have proof) in Omaha, we added one other participant that year, my brother-in-law who lives in Lincoln, and then another participant the following year, the inestimable Bob the railroad worker, also of Lincoln. As an aside, in year 36 of his quest, Railroad Bob aka “Underbelly” continues to covet the day that he wins his first HSL title. Not stupid, just not lucky.

We then added two more owners/managers the next year, after they successfully completed our highly-selective qualifying process, and then two more the next year, and we continued to expand our selective membership until we attained our current number of 13 owners/managers. We have never had an owner/manager leave the league. The shame would be terminal.

We annually have our player draft every March at my law firm, take a trip together to some major-league park every summer, get together for a lunch every Christmas, and then have our annual owners meeting every January at which time the traveling trophy (The Cup) changes hands.

This is our 37th year of competition. The league is as competitive now as when we were young bucks in our twenties. We all bleed baseball. It is our collective passion.

We seek no publicity for our Band of Brothers. To the contrary, we want nothing to interfere with our beloved fraternal sharing of our love of the great game of baseball. That said, if there is anything else you would want to know about our cherished organization, please don’t hesitate to let me know.

Dave

MARKS’ MAY 3, 2021 RESPONSE:

Hi, Dave,

I knew that column would find other baseball crazies out there. A fantasy league sort of replaces the fraternities of our youth.



It looks like your Hot Stove League is the new world record holder, besting the UBL by one year. You’ve built it to 13 owners, we’ve kept ours at 10.

Have you really had no turnover? We’ve had one death, besides Darryl Kile, of course.

I’ll let you know if I hear from any other claimants to the record. Thanks for your interest.

Bob Marks
Omaha History Detective

DDE'S MAY 3, 2021 RESPONSE

Bob

Wow, that was quick!

Yes, it is true, we have never lost an owner/manager, and hopefully we are all in good enough health to keep this string going for at least another decade or so.

I forgot to mention that we have a pretty cool website that one of my legal assistants (Linda Koftan, herself an ardent baseball fan, and a crackerjack webpage designer and blog sprucer-upper) developed for us many years ago, and which we modify every season. If you look up Eastern Nebraska Hot Stove League, I think you can find it. I am copying Linda in on this email, so she may be able to provide you with better direction on how to get to our website, should you want to.

I am heading out now for a deposition in New Jersey set for tomorrow. With any luck, I will be taking in a Blue Claws minor league baseball game there tomorrow night.

Looking forward to hearing more about our baseball brethren out there.

Dave

MARKS' JULY 27, 2021 EMAIL:

Hi, Dave,

I'm working on a book of Omaha history articles which will incorporate the columns I wrote for the World-Herald. I'm adding a postscript to the story about record setters in Omaha and our fantasy baseball league in particular. I've attached a draft of my postscript for your review and approval to use.

I took a look at your website, and see that you are quite an accomplished writer. Perhaps you chose the wrong occupation, as I may have. If you would like to add a short comment to my postscript, please do so.

Congrats to all of your managers and to the organizers of and contributors to your terrific website. I see that it isn't a requirement of yours to be born in 1958, but it must help. On the average I think our managers are slightly younger than yours, but I am the grizzled veteran at 82. Good luck in trying to outlast us for the record!

Regards,
Bob

DDE'S RESPONSE:

Bob

Thanks again for your kind comments. We may have both chosen the wrong occupation, but it seems like things have probably worked out pretty well for both of us.

For my PS, I would add:

The 13 of us in the Eastern Nebraska Hot Stove League often reflect on just how lucky we all are to have found this band of brothers who are all crazy about baseball, and who all enjoy visiting ballparks and talking trades and smack, and just generally relishing each other's company. While we are all quite competitive and all fight like hell to move up in the league standings each and every day, in the end having our names etched on The Cup (our traveling trophy) when we pilot home a winner is just frosting on the cake—it is the friendships that count, and the camaraderie that matters.

As we near the final third of our 37th season of Hot Stove League competition, we look forward to hearing more about other fantasy baseball leagues that have had the same level of enjoyment that our league has brought to each of us.

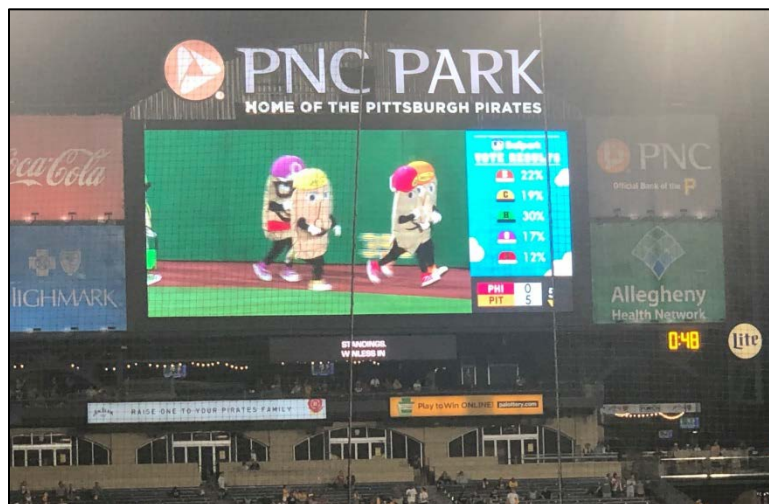
Dave

Give yourselves a pat on the back, fellas. We are the unrivaled champions of fantasy league baseball!

THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER

WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS

While in Pittsburgh at the end of July for my annual pancreas look-see, we saw the usually hapless Pirates pummel the cross-state Phillies by the score of 7-0. While at the game, my pancreas specialist physician Dr. Brand pointed out that when we last attended a Pirates game together in the spring of 2019, there was only one starting Pirate player who was in the starting lineup for the game against the Phillies, Gregor Polanco. In other words, yet another Pirates rebuild project.



WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS

One of the Pirates' hitters hit a ball to right center that looked like it might leave the Yard but instead dropped in for a ground rule double after it bounced over the wall, after having been horribly misplayed by the Phillies outfielder. Only two innings later did I realize that it was Bryce Harper who did his best imitation of a drunken sailor as he spun around in a circle and missed a ball that clearly should have been caught, although the scorekeeper did not give him an error. I'm not sure if Harper has called it in for the season or just made one bad play that night.

WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS

Did anybody besides me catch the women's hammer throw at the Olympics of Tokyo? Fascinating. There cannot be any other event which requires the sort of precision technique of the hammer throw. I don't know if she placed or not, but this stout little Chinese woman who looked about as athletic as, say, Itchie, had the hammer throw technique down cold and threw the dang sphere a country mile. Amazing.

WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS

I was happy to see the American women's volleyball team take gold for the first time in history, especially with three former Huskers on the squad. But do they really have to hug and high-five after each and every point, win or lose? Nobody deserves to be that peppy and cheerful.

ON TO ARLINGTON!

This Friday-Sunday will mark the annual Hot Stove League Trip with our planned junket to Arlington to see the new home of the Texas Rangers in a weekend series against the Oakland A's. Looks like there will be six of us in attendance--sure wish it was all 13. Be that as it may, we will report back on this year's anticipated highlights and hijinks.

Skipper