

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. 7

April 16, 2021

Brethren:

Happy Baseball Season to all! Isn't it great having baseball games to watch every night, Yahoo point totals to look at every evening and morning, and the thrill of another Hot Stove League season? Can I get an Amen!

DRAFT DAY 2021

The 37th Annual Hot Stove League Draft took place this year in the opulent and spacious Board Room at Bridges Trust, **A NAME THAT YOU CAN TRUST**.¹ Participating live and in person were Commissioner CatHerder, PAwesome, Foster, Magpie, Sunny, BearMouse and this humble scribe. Participating from the safety of the Gaines Otis conference room was Jim Ed,² while Screech logged in from The Butterfly Cave, B.T. from his moat- and barbed wire-encircled stronghold in East Lincoln, Shamu from the Heavens Gate Trailer Estates Mobile Home Park on Rush Limbaugh Circle in East Phoenix, and Underbelly and SloPay from the Jimmy Hoffa Memorial Featherbedding Conference room at the Teamsters' Union Headquarters in Lincoln. With all accounted for, and all participating in one way or another, the 2021 Draft was successfully completed in nearly dry fashion,³ but there was a frenzied run on Frank's Pizza that nearly resulted in a fistfight, even *sans* Shamu.

All in all, a fun afternoon, and our repeated thanks and kudos to PAwesome for hosting the event, which we all hope and assume will return to an entirely live format next season. For those of you who could not attend live, we offer a few pictures from the blessed event.

¹ This was a paid advertisement. Sorry, hard times.

² In full camo attire and armed to the teeth.

³ Only two of the room temperature Hamm's beers that were offered up were consumed, inexplicably.



O-h-h-h, Dreamweaver



Dead Man Sitting



An Exhausted Commissioner CatHerder Breathes a Sigh of Relief



History Records a Socially-Distant Draft

WEEK 1 STANDINGS (April 1-10)

1	Bums	824.1	84.3	-
2	Saints	820.5	89.2	3.6

3	Bombers	698.7	60.3	125.4
4	Skipjacks	692.1	55.7	132.0
5	Redbirds	688.3	37.7	135.8
6	Cubs	681.9	43.7	142.2
7	Wahoos	664.0	79.0	160.1
8	Tigers	617.5	100.2	206.6
9	Blues	604.1	2.3	220.0
10	Senators	515.1	97.5	309.0
11	Tribe	496.9	43.1	327.2
12	Bears	493.5	27.0	330.6
13	Monarchs	472.1	32.0	352.0

TOP 25 PITCHERS THRU WEEK 1

1.	Joe Musgrove	Bums	86.0
2.	Aaron Civale	Monarchs	66.0
3.	José Berríos	Blues	64.0
4.	Corbin Burnes	Redbirds	63.0
	Clayton Kershaw	Senators	63.0
6.	Steven Matz	Saints	61.0
	Jacob deGrom	Wahoos	61.0
8.	Lance Lynn	Bums	58.0
	Gerrit Cole	Bums	58.0
10.	Tyler Glasnow	Bears	56.0
11.	Zack Greinke	Senators	54.0
12.	Trevor Bauer	Tribe	53.0
13.	Luke Weaver	Wahoos	52.0
	Kevin Gausman	Saints	52.0
15.	Johnny Cueto	Cubs	50.0
	Zach Plesac	Skipjacks	50.0
	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	50.0
18.	Sandy Alcantara	Wahoos	48.0
	Jake Arrieta	Bears	48.0
20.	Julio Urías	Tigers	47.0
	John Means	Cubs	47.0
	Jon Gray	Wahoos	47.0
23.	Shane Bieber	Bombers	46.0
24.	Nathan Eovaldi	Bombers	44.0
	Michael Pineda	Saints	44.0

TOP 25 HITTERS THROUGH WEEK 1

1.	J.D. Martinez	Blues	80.5
2.	Byron Buxton	Tribe	66.0
3.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Senators	64.1
4.	Mike Trout	Skipjacks	59.0
5.	Tyler Naquin	Tribe	57.5
6.	Nelson Cruz	Cubs	57.0
7.	Ryan McMahon	Skipjacks	54.8
8.	Yermín Mercedes	Blues	52.5
9.	Nick Castellanos	Cubs	51.6
10.	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	Blues	51.2
11.	Max Muncy	Wahoos	49.6
12.	Cedric Mullins	Tigers	49.0
13.	Justin Turner	Wahoos	48.5
14.	Jared Walsh	Senators	48.2
15.	Whit Merrifield	Tribe	47.9
16.	Shohei Ohtani (Batter)	Skipjacks	46.0
17.	Eric Hosmer	Bums	45.3
18.	Wil Myers	Monarchs	45.0
19.	Christian Vázquez	Skipjacks	44.9
	Jose Altuve	Bums	44.9
21.	Mark Canha	Bums	43.5
	Rafael Devers	Saints	43.5
23.	Franmil Reyes	Skipjacks	43.0
24.	Ketel Marte	Redbirds	42.1
25.	Corey Seager	Wahoos	41.2

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I realize that at this point in the season it is customary for yours truly to put out a full-blown edition of Skipper's Pics 'N' Pans, but due to pandemic logistical challenges, this season we are going to use an abbreviated format and dish them out on a piecemeal basis. This year we begin with the team that drafted first, the **Redbirds**, followed by the **Senators**, followed by the **Wahoos**, and so forth and so on. So without further ado, here you have:

SKIP'S PIX 'N' PANZ

REDBIRDS

OVERVIEW: Decent starting pitching with Brandon Woodruff, Corbin Burnes and Lance McCullers, Jr., but relief corps is wanting. Serviceable infield with Lindor, Bell and Seager, but like their owner, the **Redbirds'** outfield is a little bit light in the loafers.

FIRST AND WORST GAFFE: Kyle Tucker in the 4th round. He probably would have lasted until the 14th round, Jimmy.

SAVVIEST SELECTION: Burnes in the 5th. He is a strikeout machine. Tirebiter absolutely mowed my grass on that one.

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH (POF): A definite drop for the **Chirpers**: Leader of the Lower Division--**7th place**.

SENATORS:

OVERVIEW: This team features the best hitter⁴ in the Majors (Acuna, Jr.) who was astutely snapped up by the Skipper after Tirebiter fumbled the opening snap. This team also features a top three infield (Xander Bogaerts, Ozzie Albies, Tim Anderson, Jared Walsh and Gio Urshela), so there may be a tendency to overlook Skipper's stellar starting pitching (Kershaw, Greinke, Peralta, Boyd, etc., etc.).

FIRST AND WORST GAFFE: Zach Davies in the 17th round, but hey, it *was* the 17th round.

SAVVIEST SELECTION: Many to choose from but Jerad Walsh (Senators' 19th pick) may go down in Hot Stove League history.

POF: Yet another year in the money--**3rd place**.

WAHOOS:

OVERVIEW: Not a terrible team, but certainly nothing to write home to mom and pop about. Decent starting pitching with deGrom, Weaver, Alcantara, Wheeler and Gray, but decidedly flaccid in the outfield and around the horn.

FIRST AND WORST GAFFE: Marcell Ozuna in the 3rd was the first clear sign of an intracerebral event ravaging PAwesome's diminishing grey matter.

SAVVIEST SELECTION: Offhand, Max Muncy in the 6th is looking pretty sweet right now.

POF: Another disappointing year for the **Wahoos**--**4th place**.

MONARCHS:

OVERVIEW: A fecund infield with Goldschmidt, Semien, Olson, Chapman and Myers, and seemingly muscular starting pitching with the duo of Luis Castillo (Round 2) and Blackjack Flaherty (Round 3). Of course, this Draft Starters Early strategy by Screech was immediately called into question, as Castillo did a Michael Jackson moonwalk to the tune of **minus 20** on Opening Day (3.1 innings, 8 hits, 2 walks, 8 earned runs, a loss), and Flaherty likewise went southbound (minus 1) on Opening Day by giving up 6 earned runs and 2 walks in 4.1 innings. Adding to Screech's Opening Day misery were his two other Opening Day starters, Kyle Gibson

⁴ Currently leading the HSL with 111.5 points (Avg 8.6 points/game), and leading the Majors with 7 HRs, 17 runs scored, a 1.000 slugging percentage and a 1.492 OPS. I mean, he's no Soto, but I guess he will do.

and Brad Keller, who faced off against each other at Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City and both gave up 5 earned runs in the first frame. While neither pitcher took the loss, Gibson hopscotched the **Monarchs** backwards to the tune of **minus 13** when he couldn't even get out of the first inning (.1 IP, 4 H, 3 BB, 5 ER) and Keller outpaced him from an absolute number standpoint with **minus 17** (1.1 IP, 9 H, 2 BB, 6 ER)--for a total of **minus 51 pitching points** from Screech's four Opening Day starters. Oh, and temporary **Monarch** relief pitcher Aaron Bummer contributed to the cause with a negative 5 point-outing, meaning a total of **56 negative points** from Screech's five Opening Day pitchers. An historic start to the **Monarchs'** 2021 campaign, to be certain.

FIRST AND WORST GAFFE: Drinking the Kool-Aid on the *Pitching is Everything* theme.

SAVVIEST SELECTION: Hmmm. Brad Keller in the 19th or Kyle Gibson in the 28th? Psych! Neither. Just checking to see if you're paying attention. Let's say Marcus Semien in the 7th, which may be a stretch.

POF: Screech bravely soldiers on after a devastating Opening Day and scratches and claws his way up to--wait for it--**8th place**.

BUMS

OVERVIEW: Starting pitching is Salty with a capital S, with a staff featuring Gerrit Cole, Lance Lynn and Joe Musgrave. In fact, this staff is so good that Magpie was comfortable parting ways before the season even began with his 25th round Draft selection, Johnny Cueto, who has now returned to his former Cy Young form with, of course, the **Cubs**. Beyond pitching, the **Bums** have a serviceable infield, but the fact that Magpie did not draft an outfielder until picking up the coveted Jesse Winker Tinker in the 8th round tells us all you need to know about the **Bums'** OF: It's dreadful.

FIRST AND WORST GAFFE: Buying into the Trae-Top Turner overhype and drafting him 3rd. Hey, Magpie figured that 17 different baseball publications couldn't be wrong.

SAVVIEST SELECTION: The aforementioned Joe Musgrave, who inconceivably lasted until the 7th round. Ya bunch of dolts, ya!

POF: While it pains me to say it, and it's not just because the **Bums** are now in 1st place, but it looks like another championship season for Tricky--**1st Place**.

SKIPJACKS

OVERVIEW: Beyond Trout and Buehler, there's just not that much to love about this team. Apparently Foster was well into the cups⁵ prior to his arrival at Bridges Trust. His blood alcohol level appears to have topped out in the fifth round with the drafting of the much-heralded Luis Robert. *100 bottles of beer on the wall, 100 bottles of beer. . . .*

⁵ Hello. His other Delta Chi nickname--besides Flounder--is **Bender**, for the love of Mike.

FIRST AND WORST GAFFE: Pete Alonzo in the 3rd (wait, you mean he could have had Bregman, Glasnow, DJ LeMahieu, Vlad Jr., Arenado, Abreu or Devers in that round? Why weren't Itchie's colleagues calling 911 for this obvious stroke victim?) In Alonzo's case, Past *is not* Prologue.

SAVVIEST SELECTION: Somebody help me out here. Okay, in the one in a trillion chance that he remains healthy and plays in at least 150 games, then picking up Ohtani in the 12th was a real shrewd pick.

POF: While sad to see the once mighty fallen, Itchie proves once again that as in life, as an HSL competitor, his future is in the past--**10th place**.

BOMBERS

OVERVIEW: Drafting out of the coveted middle position in our first-ever true serpentine draft, BearMouse took full advantage by picking up three solid starting pitchers in the first six rounds with Bieber, Maeda, and Strasburg. How the Yankees go will be as the **Bombers** go, with BearMouse picking up Aaron Judge in the 2nd, Gleyber Torres in the 5th, Gary Sánchez in the 12th, and Aaron Hicks in the 15th. What, he couldn't find a spot for Brett Gardner?

FIRST AND WORST GAFFE: Assuming that we're not counting his ill-conceived January 6th trip to D.C., let's just say that drafting Judge in the 2nd round might have been a titch early. Hey, I'm *judgeing* here.⁶

SAVVIEST SELECTION: Taking Shane Bieber as his first overall player in the 7th slot was bold, but brilliant. The guy is a certified stud.

POF: While every fiber of my being would love to see BearMouse (or Underbelly) chalk up their first HSL title, I'd be lying if I said that this was the year. Sorry, BearMouse--**6th Place**.

Next Issue: The rest of youse.

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SHORT HOPS



The book I am now reading is *Pinstripe Empire*, the history of Mouse and Screech's beloved Highlanders/Yankees franchise. It is a hefty 500-plus pages long, so I will be at it for a while. One thing worth noting right off the bat is that in its inaugural campaign in 1903, the Highlanders captain and one of its leading pitchers was Clark Calvin Griffin, who pitched in the bigs for a total of 23 seasons

⁶ Did anyone else but me miss all of B.T.'s bad puns at Draft Day? I didn't think so.

and managed and then owned the Washington Senators for many years, and who was enshrined in Cooperstown in 1946. One of the team's most popular players was the base-stealing prodigy Wee Willie Keeler, the diminutive (5-foot-4) shortstop who was most famous for his 44-consecutive game hitting streak, as well as his calling card catchphrase "Hit 'em where they ain't." Sounds simple enough.

MLB debut	
April 11, 1891, for the St. Louis Browns	
Last MLB appearance	
October 7, 1914, for the Washington Senators	
MLB statistics	
Win-loss record	237-146
Earned run average	3.31
Strikeouts	955
Managerial record	1,491-1,367
Winning %	.522
Teams	
As player	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Louis Browns (1891) • Boston Reds (1891) • Chicago Colts/Orphans (1893-1900) • Chicago White Stockings (1901-1902) • New York Highlanders (1903-1907) • Cincinnati Reds (1909-1910) 	

• Washington Senators (1912–1914)	
As manager	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chicago White Stockings (1901–1902)• New York Highlanders (1903–1908)• Cincinnati Reds (1909–1911)• Washington Senators (1912–1920)	
As owner	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Washington Senators (1920–1955)	
Career highlights and awards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AL Pennant 1901• MLB ERA leader (1898)• New York Yankees captain (1903–1905)• Washington Nationals Ring of Honor	
Member of the National	
★ ★ ★ Baseball Hall of Fame ★ ★ ★	
Induction	1946
Election Method	Veterans Committee



Clark Calvin "The Old Fox" Griffin

MLB debut	
September 30, 1892, for the New York Giants	
Last MLB appearance	
September 5, 1910, for the New York Giants	
MLB statistics	
Batting average	.341
Hits	2,932
Home runs	33
Runs batted in	810
Stolen bases	495
Teams	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York Giants (1892-1893) • Brooklyn Grooms (1893) • Baltimore Orioles (1894-1898) • Brooklyn Superbas (1899-1902) • New York Highlanders (1903-1909) • New York Giants (1910) 	
Career highlights and awards	
• 2x NL batting champion (1897, 1898)	
Member of the National	
★ ★ ★ Baseball Hall of Fame ★ ★ ★	
Induction	1939
Vote	75.5% (fourth ballot)



William Henry "Wee Willie" Keeler



After torrential rains in Beantown forced us to audible, Joe, Will and I veered southward to Kansas City to catch their Opening Day game against the visiting Texas Rangers, our 18th Opening Day junket in the last 19 years. Meeting up with Joe Beeson for tailgating and the game was a blast, then having a scrumptious BBQ dinner at Q39 with Sunny and then spending the night at Sunnyvale, his spacious estate, was a bonus. Watching the Royals come from behind after

the Rangers posted 5 in the top of the first was remarkable, and having to wear masks when we weren't eating or drinking--in other words, *never*--was a small price to pay to be in personal attendance at a ballgame once again.



Ain't No Day Like Opening Day!

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That's it for this issue, men.

Skip