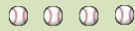


NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE



SEASON XXXVII



2020 HSL Champion
West Des Moines Cubs
Manager: Shamu

FROM THE BULLPEN

2021 Campaign

Edition No. 21

September 14, 2021

Brethren,

TRICKO, SHAMU AND B.T. ENGAGE IN THREE-LEGGED RACE TO THE FINISH

Well, well, well. It looks like there might be a pennant race after all. With three weeks of competition still in the offing, the **Bums** have a 232.0-point lead over the **Cubs** and a 336.5-point lead over the **Saints**, but all three teams have a bona fide shot at the 2021 HSL crown.

Just look at the point totals for week 23, if you don't believe me: 555.9 points for the **Cubs**; 544.9 points for the **Bums**; and 539.3 points for the **Saints**, a mad three-legged dash¹ sprint to the October 3 end-of-season finish line. Pull yourself up a chair, fellows, and grab yourself a bowl of popcorn, because this one's going to be worth watching. May the best man--er, make that the man who will give out the best swag--win.

Here are the standings through 23 weeks, and the point totals during week 23:

¹ Isn't that a visual? These three physical specimens, only a few^a years past their prime, tethered together at the company picnic and furiously thrashing their way toward the finish line.

^a Like 40 or so.

**HSL STANDINGS THRU WEEK 23
ENDING SEPTEMBER 12, 2021**

Rank	Team	Points	Pts Back
1	Bums	11282.6	-
2	Cubs	11050.6	232.0
3	Saints	10956.1	326.5
4	Skipjacks	10620.5	662.1
5	Bombers	10395.7	886.9
6	Wahoos	10330.3	952.3
7	Monarchs	10232.2	1050.4
8	Tribe	10138.7	1143.9
9	Bears	10094.5	1188.1
10	Redbirds	9973.8	1308.8
11	Tigers	9805.6	1477.0
12	Senators	9296.9	1985.7
13	Blues	9136.5	2146.1

POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 23

Rank	Team	Pts
1	Cubs	555.9
2	Bums	544.9
3	Saints	539.3
4	Wahoos	526.1
5	Redbirds	507.0
6	Bears	505.8
7	Skipjacks	499.6
8	Monarchs	447.5
9	Tigers	432.6
10	Blues	420.8
11	Bombers	366.1
12	Senators	359.7
13	Tribe	342.2

And now here are your updated lists of the Top 25 Hitters and Pitchers and the Who's Hot and Who's Not lists:

TOP 25 PITCHERS

1.	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	725.0
2.	Max Scherzer	Tigers	698.0
3.	Zack Wheeler	Wahoos	672.0
4.	Robbie Ray	Tribe	660.0
5.	Kevin Gausman	Saints	645.0
6.	Gerrit Cole	Bums	627.0
7.	Corbin Burnes	Redbirds	623.0
8.	Adam Wainwright	Monarchs	616.0
9.	Brandon Woodruff	Redbirds	596.0
10.	Julio Urías	Tigers	589.0
11.	Charlie Morton	Cubs	578.0
12.	Sandy Alcantara	Wahoos	537.0
13.	Joe Musgrove	Bums	536.0
14.	Chris Bassitt	Tribe	527.0
15.	Frankie Montas	Cubs	517.0
16.	José Berríos	Blues	513.0
17.	Lance Lynn	Bums	512.0

18.	Carlos Rodón	Bums	501.0
19.	Freddy Peralta	Senators	498.0
20.	Tyler Mahle	Saints	494.0
21.	Germán Márquez	Tigers	492.0
22.	Lance McCullers Jr.	Redbirds	487.0
	Lucas Giolito	Bears	487.0
24.	Nathan Eovaldi	Bombers	483.0
25.	Marcus Stroman	Bombers	475.0

WHO'S HOT - PITCHING

1.	Max Scherzer	Tigers	88.0
2.	Zack Wheeler	Wahoos	67.0
3.	Eric Lauer	Bears	60.0
4.	Kevin Gausman	Saints	57.0
	Lance McCullers Jr.	Redbirds	57.0
6.	Corbin Burnes	Redbirds	50.0
7.	Steven Matz	Saints	42.0
	Patrick Corbin	Monarchs	42.0
9.	Sandy Alcantara	Wahoos	41.0
10.	Sonny Gray	Cubs	39.0
	Logan Webb	Bums	39.0
	Max Fried	Cubs	39.0
13.	Julio Urías	Tigers	37.0
	Joe Ryan	Bums	37.0
15.	Sean Manaea	Skipjacks	35.0
	Michael Pineda	Saints	35.0
	Wade Miley	Senators	35.0
	A.J. Alexy	Cubs	35.0
	Tylor Megill	Bears	35.0
20.	Cal Quantrill	Wahoos	33.0
21.	Yu Darvish	Blues	32.0
	Blake Snell	Blues	32.0
23.	Frankie Montas	Cubs	31.0
	Nathan Eovaldi	Bombers	31.0
25.	Germán Márquez	Tigers	30.0

WHO'S NOT - PITCHING

1.	Ryan Yarbrough	Redbirds	-15.0
2.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	-12.0
	Zach Davies	Redbirds	-12.0

	Glenn Otto	Wahoos	-12.0
	Eli Morgan	Blues	-12.0
6.	Jordan Montgomery	Saints	-8.0
	Eduardo Rodriguez	Cubs	-8.0
	Dylan Cease	Tribe	-8.0
9.	Kyle Freeland	Bombers	-7.0
10.	Tanner Houck	Bears	-4.0
	Casey Mize	Bombers	-4.0
12.	Brady Singer	Bombers	-2.0
	Paul Blackburn	Tribe	-2.0
14.	Taylor Widener	Tigers	-1.5
15.	Luis Garcia	Bombers	-1.0
	Chris Flexen	Tribe	-1.0
	Aaron Civale	Monarchs	-1.0
	Gerrit Cole	Bums	-1.0
	Dallas Keuchel	Tigers	-1.0
	Logan Allen	Tribe	-1.0

TOP 25 HITTERS

1.	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	Blues	693.4
2.	Marcus Semien	Monarchs	631.7
3.	Juan Soto	Redbirds	599.4
4.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	598.6
5.	Freddie Freeman	Monarchs	585.5
6.	Matt Olson	Monarchs	571.3
7.	Bryce Harper	Saints	571.2
8.	Rafael Devers	Saints	551.7
9.	Fernando Tatis Jr.	Bears	546.6
10.	José Ramírez	Cubs	543.4
11.	Bo Bichette	Skipjacks	543.2
	Cedric Mullins	Bums	543.2
13.	Austin Riley	Bears	540.2
14.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	537.9
15.	Bryan Reynolds	Bears	528.4
16.	Jorge Polanco	Saints	527.8
17.	Jose Altuve	Bums	523.7
18.	Salvador Perez	Cubs	522.9
19.	Trea Turner	Bums	519.8
20.	Max Muncy	Wahoos	519.0
21.	Aaron Judge	Bombers	517.4
22.	Carlos Correa	Bombers	514.8

23.	José Abreu	Cubs	514.1
24.	Nick Castellanos	Cubs	509.1
25.	Paul Goldschmidt	Monarchs	508.7

WHO'S HOT - HITTING

1.	Teoscar Hernández	Bears	68.5
2.	Marcus Semien	Monarchs	63.2
3.	Lourdes Gurriel Jr.	Bums	60.6
4.	Nelson Cruz	Cubs	58.0
5.	Andrew Benintendi	Redbirds	57.1
6.	Bryce Harper	Saints	56.2
7.	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	Blues	50.3
8.	Juan Soto	Redbirds	50.0
9.	Javier Báez	Bears	47.7
10.	Francisco Lindor	Redbirds	45.9
11.	Kyle Tucker	Redbirds	45.6
12.	Brandon Belt	Wahoos	44.5
13.	Anthony Santander	Skipjacks	39.5
14.	Jose Altuve	Bums	39.3
15.	Mookie Betts	Monarchs	39.2
16.	Ian Happ	Tribe	39.0
17.	Austin Hays	Cubs	38.1
18.	Alex Bregman	Saints	37.5
19.	Cedric Mullins	Bums	37.0
20.	Freddie Freeman	Monarchs	36.4
21.	Jean Segura	Tigers	35.8
22.	Robbie Grossman	Wahoos	35.5
	Josh Bell	Redbirds	35.5
24.	Eduardo Escobar	Cubs	35.4
25.	Evan Longoria	Senators	35.3

WHO'S NOT - HITTING

1.	Andrew Vaughn	Monarchs	-6.40
2.	Trent Grisham	Cubs	-6.00
3.	Gio Urshela	Senators	-4.70
4.	Jurickson Profar	Bombars	-4.30
5.	Amed Rosario	Cubs	-4.00
6.	Asdrúbal Cabrera	Senators	-2.30
7.	Tyler Naquin	Tribe	-2.00
8.	Tommy Pham	Blues	-0.50

SKIP SEZ



How can the **Monarchs** have the number 2, 5, 6 and 25 hitters and still be in 7th place? It's pitching, Screech, my boy, it's pitching.



Look at Mad Max now at number 2 on the Top 25 list of pitchers. Can you say "Gamer"?



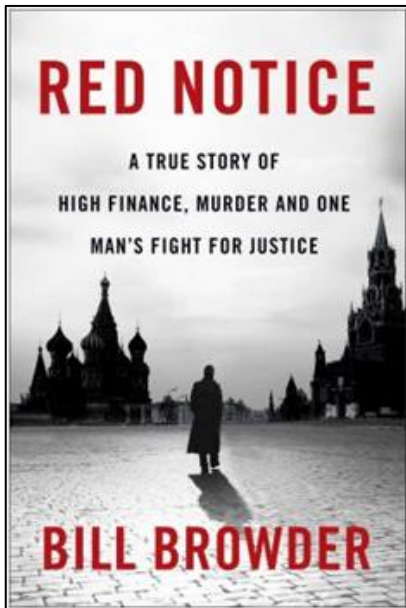
With Mad Max in No. 2, the **Tigers** now have the 2nd, 10th (Julio Uriás) and 21st (Germán Márquez) best pitchers in the league through Week 23. So you have to ask yourself, why are the **Tigers** in 11th place in the standings? Simple, my friends, it's all about hitting.

BOOK REPORT:

RED NOTICE,

A True Story of High Finance, Murder, and One Man's Fight for Justice

by Bill Browder



For our Labor Day Weekend junket to Colorado I picked up a terrific autobiography by a hedge fund founder and manager by the name of Bill Browder titled **RED NOTICE**, *A True Story of High Finance, Murder, and One Man's Fight for Justice*. While it's described as an *autobiography*, and is decidedly nonfiction, it reads much more like an espionage novel by someone like John le Carré, Robert Ludlum or Ian Fleming.

The book begins with a harrowing description by Browder about his being detained at the Sheremtyevo Airport in Moscow on his way back to his home in London, concerning an alleged visa issue, where a bunch of jackbooted Russian thugs kept him up throughout the night and made it seem certain that he would be arrested or deported. In spite of this terrifying experience, Browder decided to return to Moscow because that was his base of operations for Hermitage Capital, of which he was the founder and CEO, and which invested in Russian businesses and had accumulated enormous profits for his investors.

The story, as it goes, is that Browder² figured out that there was a lot of money to be made in Eastern Europe, and particularly in Russia, once the wall came down and Russia attempted

² Whose grandfather, Earl Browder, was a labor union organizer in Wichita, Kansas who was so good at his job that he was invited by the Communists to come to the Soviet Union in 1926. He married a

to convert to a capitalistic society. The only problem is that there were 22 oligarchs who wound up owning 39% of the Russian economy, and virtually all of the rest of the 150 million Russian citizens were left living in poverty. After Browder made a fortune trading on undervalued Russian businesses, the oligarchs attempted to simply steal from him and his Hermitage Fund by devaluing all of his investors' shares. Browder decided that he was not going to allow that to happen. Exhibiting what some might refer to as a death wish, Browder fought back against the oligarchs through various legal and media campaigns, and after a time the Russians simply revoked his visa so that he could no longer personally do business in Russia. Moreover, they raided the offices of all of his Russian attorneys, and arrested one of them and put him in prison, where he died of abuse and lack of medical attention.

This book is an excellent read, a good story, well told. I finished it in less than a week, and was wishing that I had a sequel to follow up on. I'm told there is a movie coming out on Netflix in November which is based on the book, which you should read. Skip gives *Red Notice* 5 stars.

FIRST PITCH, REVISITED

As HQ and I were thinking the other day about heading out to Werner Park for one last Storm Chasers' baseball game, I was reminded of our earlier visit there back on June 19 when I got the chance to throw out the first pitch. Maybe I am repeating myself here, but I don't think that this glorious moment was ever captured in *From the Bullpen*, so I include herewith a few photographs from that magical night:



First Pitch--Nary a Hitch

Russian girl by the name of Raisa Berkman, who bore him three children before they returned to the United States and Earl headed up the American Communist Party, running for president twice on the Communist ticket, in 1936 and 1940.



A Portrait of Study



Skip and All His Friends

Thanks to my family and my two³ friends for cheering me on that evening. It was a whole lot of fun, and I can only say that while it may not have been the best first pitch ever thrown out, it also wasn't the worst. There was the ridiculously bad throw by 50 Cent in 2018, and then the disastrous toss by Dr. Fauci earlier this year; and then the 7-year-old kid who threw in front of me skipped his pitch across the ground, making my 43-mph bullet look pretty darned good.

TOP TENS, REVISITED

Just the other day--well, maybe it was a couple of months ago, but sometime in recent memory--I was reminded (probably by B.T.) of the entrepreneurial genius of our beloved B.T. and his unprecedented idea to promote the sales of Runza products by brainstorming the marketing idea "Today's Temperature is Today's Price," or whatever they call it. This in turn reminded me that a long time ago I shared a few of B.T.'s other promotional ideas that didn't quite enjoy the same level of success. Here is that list, first published in this organ on February 14, 1996, a mere 25 years ago. I hope you enjoy it.

B.T.'S LESS SUCCESSFUL MARKETING CATCH PHRASES AND IDEAS

10. My I.Q. is your price.
9. Outspell Masterspieler for a free Runza.
8. Where's the fish?
7. Have it Fred's way.
6. Hold the Cabbage, hold the Onions, Special Orders Give Us Bunions.
5. Eat at Runza! Boy, it's funza!
4. Free "Famous Pedophile" trading cards with each order.
3. Guess number of zits on fry cook for free order of fries.
2. Runza-Ton Memorial Hamburger Special.
1. Hiring Jimmy Walker as company spokesman.

* * * * *

That's all for this issue, fellas. I'm heading up north to the Twin Cities tomorrow for the weekend wedding of my stepson Tommy, so I bid you now adieu and a good rest of your week.

Skipper

³ And apparently *only* two.