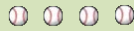


# NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE



SEASON XXXVII



2020 HSL Champion  
West Des Moines Cubs  
Manager: Shamu

400

## FROM THE BULLPEN

2021 Campaign

Edition No. 22

September 29, 2021

Brethren:

### UNCERTAIN THE FINAL RUN TO WINTER<sup>1</sup>

With the 2021 Hot Stove League season down to its final week of competition, it is indeed uncertain who will win the 2021 title as Shamu has pared the **Bums'** lead to 158.8 points through games of Sunday night. And counting. Shamu's strategy of heading over to the Valentino's Grand Buffet in West Des Moines back in August--and storing up enough grub in his backpack and his Stanley Steamer Trunk from their All You Can Eat menu--is paying rich dividends, as he has not had to leave the house in three fortnights and has hence been able to devote more or less 24/7 attention to the pennant race, the waiver wire, watching 15 baseball games a night on TV, and pretty much devoting all five of his senses to pretty much everything except his wife and daughters. But they do understand that sacrifices have to be made.



In any event, it will be whole lot of fun the rest of this week watching the fur fly and seeing if Shamu goes into Nikita Khrushchev mode if Tricko tries any trickery or if his **Cubs** team just goes cold in spite of his best efforts.

So good luck to both the **Bums** and the **Cubs** in this final run to winter, and congrats to B.T. for piloting his reconstituted **Saints** franchise to a 3rd place finish, more than a hoot and a holler ahead of the 4th place **Skipjacks**.

Here are the standings through Week 25 and the point totals for the 25th week of competition.

<sup>1</sup> Does anyone here recognize this title? Just curious. No fair looking it up.

**HSL STANDINGS THRU WEEK 25  
ENDING SEPTEMBER 26, 2021**

Rank	Team	Points	Pts Back
1	Bums	12135.7	-
2	Cubs	11976.9	158.8
3	Saints	11836.0	299.7
4	Skipjacks	11467.0	668.7
5	Monarchs	11342.8	792.9
6	Wahoos	11238.1	897.6
7	Bears	11219.2	916.5
8	Bombers	11208.4	927.3
9	Tribe	11004.8	1130.9
10	Redbirds	10755.6	1380.1
11	Tigers	10518.7	1617.0
12	Senators	10156.6	1979.1
13	Blues	9938.5	2197.2

**POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 25**

Rank	Team	Pts
1	Bears	607.4
2	Cubs	497.9
3	Monarchs	475.1
4	Wahoos	474.1
5	Bums	459.2
	Tribe	459.2
7	Skipjacks	458.9
8	Saints	452.4
9	Redbirds	431.0
10	Senators	412.0
11	Bombers	404.7
12	Blues	393.3
13	Tigers	339.8

And here are the customary pitching and hitting leaderboards and Who's Hot lists:

**TOP 25 PITCHERS**

1.	Max Scherzer	Tigers	741.0
2.	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	735.0
3.	Robbie Ray	Tribe	731.0
4.	Zack Wheeler	Wahoos	720.0
5.	Kevin Gausman	Saints	679.0
	Corbin Burnes	Redbirds	679.0
7.	Gerrit Cole	Bums	668.0
8.	Adam Wainwright	Monarchs	659.0
9.	Brandon Woodruff	Redbirds	639.0
10.	Julio Urías	Tigers	638.0
11.	Sandy Alcantara	Wahoos	609.0
12.	Charlie Morton	Cubs	603.0
13.	José Berríos	Blues	581.0
14.	Frankie Montas	Cubs	579.0
15.	Joe Musgrove	Bums	571.0
16.	Freddy Peralta	Senators	561.0
17.	Tyler Mahle	Saints	556.0
18.	Lucas Giolito	Bears	548.0
19.	Chris Bassitt	Tribe	540.0
20.	Max Fried	Cubs	532.0

21.	Lance Lynn	Bums	523.0
22.	Dylan Cease	Tribe	521.0
23.	Lance McCullers Jr.	Redbirds	520.0
24.	Anthony DeSclafani	Bombers	517.0
25.	Carlos Rodón	Bums	509.0

### WHO'S HOT - PITCHING

1.	Ranger Suárez	Bears	57.0
2.	Marco Gonzales	Senators	56.0
3.	Framber Valdez	Tribe	52.0
	Shane Baz	Bears	52.0
5.	Alek Manoah	Bears	44.0
6.	John Means	Cubs	42.0
7.	Max Fried	Cubs	41.0
8.	Chad Green	Tigers	40.0
9.	Kris Bubic	Blues	37.0
	Ian Anderson	Blues	37.0
11.	Jordan Montgomery	Saints	36.0
12.	Chris Flexen	Tribe	35.0
	Corbin Burnes	Redbirds	35.0
	Eric Lauer	Bears	35.0
	Eli Morgan	Blues	35.0
16.	Frankie Montas	Cubs	34.0
17.	Tyler Mahle	Saints	33.0
18.	Zac Gallen	Saints	32.0
	Jake Woodford	Skipjacks	32.0
	Patrick Corbin	Monarchs	32.0
21.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	31.0
	Kevin Gausman	Saints	31.0
	Jon Lester	Senators	31.0
	Lucas Giolito	Bears	31.0
	Freddy Peralta	Senators	31.0

### WHO'S NOT - PITCHING

1.	Nathan Eovaldi	Bombers	-17.0
	Aaron Civale	Monarchs	-17.0
3.	Zach Davies	Redbirds	-15.0

	Taijuan Walker	Tribe	-15.0
	Triston McKenzie	Tribe	-15.0
6.	Brett Anderson	Tribe	-12.0
7.	A.J. Alexy	Cubs	-9.0
8.	Carlos Carrasco	Redbirds	-8.0
9.	Vladimir Gutierrez	Bums	-7.0
	Alec Mills	Skipjacks	-7.0
11.	Tylor Megill	Bears	-5.0
12.	Wil Crowe	Cubs	-4.0
13.	Jack Flaherty	Bears	-3.0
	Justin Steele	Monarchs	-3.0
15.	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	-2.0
	Germán Márquez	Tigers	-2.0
17.	Marcus Stroman	Bombors	-1.0
	Adam Wainwright	Monarchs	-1.0
19.	Tanner Houck	Bears	-0.5

### TOP 25 HITTERS

1.	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	Blues	735.9
2.	Juan Soto	Redbirds	689.5
3.	Marcus Semien	Monarchs	677.5
4.	Bryce Harper	Saints	649.5
5.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	648.6
6.	Freddie Freeman	Monarchs	641.0
7.	Matt Olson	Monarchs	634.2
8.	Paul Goldschmidt	Monarchs	623.2
9.	José Ramírez	Cubs	621.5
10.	Austin Riley	Bears	605.9
11.	Rafael Devers	Saints	598.0
12.	Fernando Tatis Jr.	Bears	597.8
13.	Trea Turner	Bums	595.5
14.	Jose Altuve	Bums	590.1
15.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	586.6
16.	Bo Bichette	Skipjacks	585.4
17.	Cedric Mullins	Bums	580.7
18.	Aaron Judge	Bombors	570.5
19.	Salvador Perez	Cubs	569.6
20.	Carlos Correa	Bombors	566.0

21.	Bryan Reynolds	Bears	562.4
22.	Nick Castellanos	Cubs	562.1
23.	Manny Machado	Bums	559.9
24.	Teoscar Hernández	Bears	554.7
25.	José Abreu	Cubs	553.4

### WHO'S HOT - HITTING

1.	Paul Goldschmidt	Monarchs	63.0
2.	Juan Soto	Redbirds	62.5
3.	Harrison Bader	Wahoos	61.1
4.	Austin Riley	Bears	51.6
5.	Brandon Belt	Wahoos	49.5
6.	Giancarlo Stanton	Saints	48.5
7.	Trea Turner	Bums	46.3
8.	Tyler O'Neill	Monarchs	44.0
9.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	43.6
10.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	41.5
11.	Nick Castellanos	Cubs	41.0
12.	Keibert Ruiz	Bombers	37.4
13.	Freddie Freeman	Monarchs	36.4
14.	Kyle Farmer	Bums	36.0
15.	Manny Machado	Bums	35.5
	Byron Buxton	Tribe	35.5
17.	Eugenio Suárez	Skipjacks	35.4
18.	Corey Seager	Wahoos	34.9
19.	Brandon Crawford	Senators	34.8
20.	J.T. Realmuto	Tigers	34.3
21.	C.J. Cron	Redbirds	33.8
22.	Kyle Schwarber	Wahoos	33.0
23.	Lane Thomas	Cubs	32.1
24.	Aaron Judge	Bombers	31.5
25.	Bryce Harper	Saints	31.3

### WHO'S NOT - HITTING

1.	David Fletcher	Senators	-5.4
2.	Jonathan Villar	Saints	-3.0
3.	Luke Voit	Wahoos	-2.3

4.	Garrett Hampson	Blues	-1.0
5.	Mike Moustakas	Wahoos	-0.5
6.	Eric Haase	Tribe	-0.3

### SKIP SEZ



Mad Max finally passed up Walker Buehler for the top spot among HSL pitchers. What a stud, and what a trade by the Dodgers.



Somehow, whether through some sort of sorcery, sleight of hand or just plain diligence, Shamu ended up with three different pitchers in the Top 25: Charlie Morton at #12 with 603.0 points; Frankie Montas at #14 with 579.0 points; and Max Fried at #20 with 532.0 points for the season. If anyone had predicted that those three pitchers would be in the Top 25 at season's end when we drafted back in March, the rest of us would have been suggesting a full psychiatric evaluation of said person.



Take a look at the "Who's Hot - Pitching" list for this week. SloPay, who is managing the holy crap out of his team, had the top pitcher for the week with Ranger Suárez at 57.0 points, Shane Baz tied for 3rd at 52.0 points, Alek Manoah was at 5th with 44.0 points, Eric Lauer at 12th with 35.0 points and Lucas Giolito at 21st with 31.0 points. Where on earth does he come up with these people?



The **Redbirds'** Zach Davies had another stellar week with -15.0 points. All I can say is that I am quite happy that I cut him loose from my roster many, many months ago, so that Brother Tirebiter could take on the frequent moonwalk beatings instead of yours truly.



It looks like Vlad Jr. will end the season as the top hitter since he has a fairly safe lead over #2 Juan Soto, but does he still have a shot at the Triple Crown? Only time will tell.



The **Cubs** pulled the same sort of rabbit-out-of-the-hat with his hitters this year, somehow coaxing José Ramírez into the 9th position with 621.5 points and finding a faith healer for Salvador Perez's knees, allowing him to finish in the Top 25 of all hitters, currently at #19 with 569.6 points. Oh, yeah, Shamu also has Nick Castellanos at #22 with 562.1 points and José Abreu at #25 with 553.4 points. Frankly, I'm not sure why the **Cubs** aren't 500 points ahead of the **Bums** instead of trailing them by 158.8.



Capping off another truly miserable season for the **Senators**, David Fletcher led the pack in "Who's Not - Hitting" with -5.4 points for the week. How? Why? What have I done to piss off the baseball gods this time?

## HUSKER REHASH

Not that any of you/us want to hear/think any more about it, but I need a chance to vent a bit more about the Huskers' loss on Saturday to Michigan State University in East Lansing, primarily because I was there to witness the disastrous ending to the game in person. As you can imagine, having a crushing defeat snatched from the jaws of victory was even more painful when sitting amongst a heavily partisan Spartan crowd.<sup>2</sup>

Joe, Will and I flew up to Detroit on Friday night and then drove up to East Lansing for our annual Husker road trip, and spirits were high as we checked into *The Graduate Hotel* on campus and then made our way up to *The Rock* bar on the 10th floor to clink a few beer steins together in anticipation of a signature win for the Frost era.



View of Spartan Stadium from The Rock on the 10th Floor of The Graduate

On Saturday we found a great breakfast place called *Beggar's* to fortify ourselves for the big day, and then did a walking tour of the very beautiful East Lansing campus. We were impressed with the ubiquity of the Spartan tailgate gatherings, and on a beautiful, crisp, sunny

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<sup>2</sup> But all very polite and well-behaved. Then, after our stunning collapse and loss in overtime, a very nice lady sitting in the row right in front of us turned to us and said, and I quote, "I'm so sorry." That is where we are at with our football program, getting pity from other teams. Who would ever have thought.

Fall day, it was shaping up to be a Husker fan experience for the ages. Little did we know what lay ahead.



I'm pretty sure you all saw what happened from the comfort of your own homes, but after the Huskers scored their touchdown in the fourth quarter and then the defense held Sparty to three and out on their next possession, it looked like we had the game in the bag, as the small band of Husker faithful at the stadium started to chant *Go Big Red* for the first and only time in the game. After a bit, I already had chalked up the victory in my head, and was thinking ahead to next week and then thinking that we might actually get to a 4-and-2 record after beating Northwestern at home, when the bottom absolutely fell out. With our best field position of the game to start the drive, we suddenly got as conservative as the fringe right wing<sup>3</sup> of the HSL, and then had to punt the ball away, resulting in the horrifying runback after some unanticipated trickery from former Husker assistant coach Ross Els.

The rest of the game was a freaking train wreck. I'm not sure whether I hope to forget it or to never forget it. Let me just finish the venting process with these two questions:

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<sup>3</sup> You know who you are.



1. Why would Frost not call one of his two timeouts with 17 seconds left in regulation and at least *try* to get the ball downfield for a field goal attempt?<sup>4</sup>

2. How is it that the punt return unit did *not* have at least one or two helmets on the other punt returner, even with the tomfoolery<sup>5</sup> of Sparty's Special Teams Coordinator Ross Els?<sup>6</sup> Coaching malpractice!

Here is my take, and I've been saying this for well over a year. Adrian Martinez is just way too much like that other Martinez, Taylor. Tons of talent, faster than heck, great at gaining individual records and milestones, gritty, and probably even a very decent kid, but *not*, and I repeat *not*, a WINNER. Athletically and otherwise, he's probably a cut above Taylor Martinez, Tommy Armstrong, Jr., and Jamal Lord, all of whom had very nice careers at Nebraska in terms of their individual statistics, but the problem is, he's just not nearly *enough* like Tommy Frazier and Turner Gill, both of whom were just great at getting wins.

Some of you may disagree with me--I fully expect a two or three page rebuttal from PAwesome, for example--but show me a single big play made by Adrian in a crucial moment in a big game that resulted in a win. You can't do it, can you? In my view, he simply doesn't have that intangible quality, and yet Frost just doesn't seem to see it, and so it's going to be more of the same for the rest of this season and, most likely, in 2022.

So there you have it.

### ROAD TRIPS REVISITED

Michigan State was our tenth Big Ten Road Trip that Joe, Will and I have embarked upon together, and our ninth visit to an opposing Big Ten team's stadium. Here they are, together with the results:

Year	Date	Opponent	Stadium	NE Coach	Opp. Coach	Result
2011	10/1	Wisconsin Badgers	Camp Randall Stadium Madison, WI	Bo Pelini	Bret Bielema	48-17 (L)
2012	10/6	Ohio State Buckeyes	Ohio Stadium Columbus, OH	Bo Pelini	Urban Meyer	63-38 (L)
2012	12/2	Wisconsin Badgers	Lucas Oil Stadium Indianapolis, IN (Big 10 C'ship)	Bo Pelini	Bret Bielema	70-31 (L)
2014	11/28	Iowa Hawkeyes	Kinnick Stadium Iowa City, IA	Bo Pelini	Kirk Ferentz	37-34 (W)(OT)
2015	10/27	Minnesota Gophers	TCF Bank Stadium Minneapolis, MN	Mike Riley	Jerry Kill	48-25 (W)
2016	10/15	Indiana Hoosiers	Memorial Stadium Bloomington, IN	Mike Riley	Kevin Wilson	27-22 (W)
2017	11/18	Nittany Lions	Beaver Stadium State College, PA	Mike Riley	James Franklin	56-44 (L)

<sup>4</sup> This is a rhetorical question, of course, because we all know the answer--zero faith in his starting QB.

<sup>5</sup> In having the non-receiving punt returner give the signal for a fair catch.

<sup>6</sup> Former Nebraska assistant coach on Bo Pelini's staff and son of former Rocket High coach Bob Els during our glorious 1975 senior season. (And what is his phone number, and when can he start his new job as Husker Special Teams Coordinator, replacing the incompetent boob we have back there now.)

2018	9/22	Michigan Wolverines	Michigan Stadium Ann Arbor, MI	Scott Frost	Jim Harbaugh	56-10 (L)
2019	11/23	Maryland Terrapins	Maryland Stadium College Park, MD	Scott Frost	Mike Locksley	54-7 (W)
2021	9/25	Michigan State Spartans	Spartan Stadium East Lansing, MI	Scott Frost	Mel Tucker	23-20 (L)

It is utterly shocking that in our ten Husker road trips from 2011 to 2021, the Husker coach with the best record is none other than Mike Riley, who went 2-and-1 in his three games in the above summary. Bo Pelini had the worst record, at 1-and-3, and Scott Frost currently stands at 1-and-2 after the Spartan debacle.

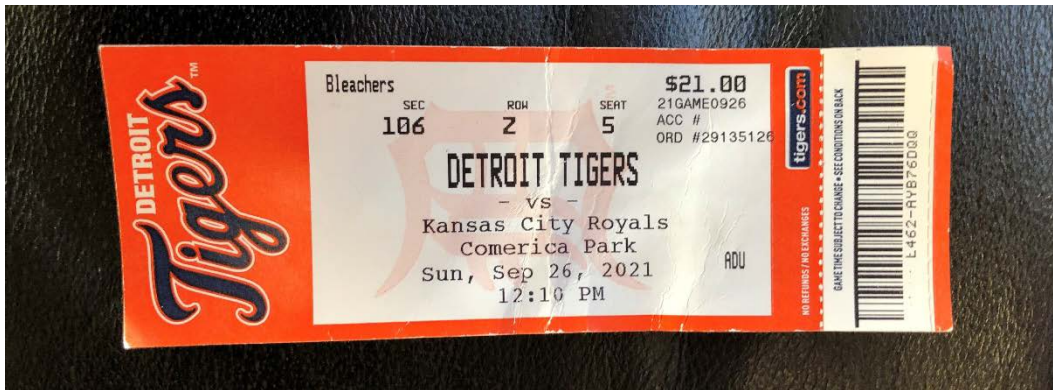
I would be remiss if I did not mention that we all thought the Michigan State fans were some of the nicest people we had ever been in contact with as a visiting team, both before the game; when they were behind and appeared to be headed for a loss; and after their victory, when they were extraordinarily gracious, with one or two exceptions.

## COMERICA REVISITED

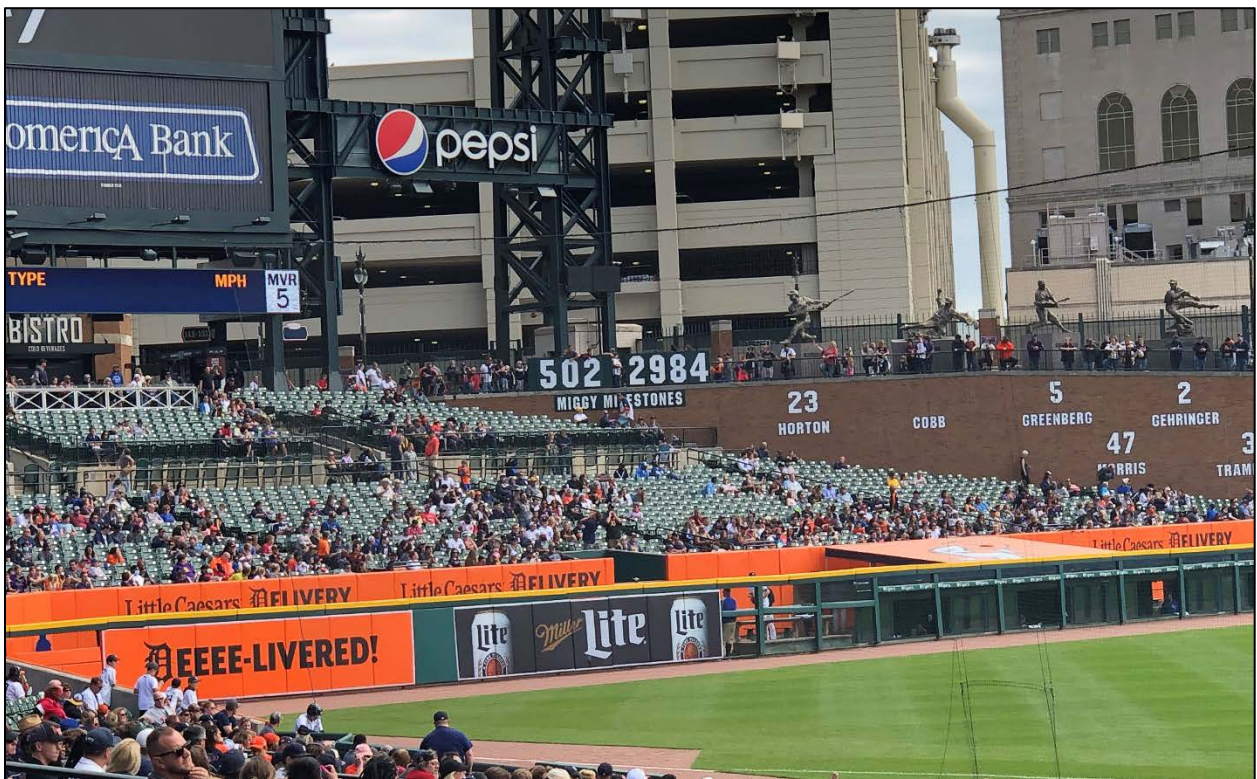


The Ernst Lads at Comerica Park

On Sunday last, Joe, Will and I capped off a fun sports weekend by catching the Tigers-Royals game at Comerica on Sunday afternoon. On a beautiful, sun-splashed autumn afternoon, we were able to get bleacher tickets for 21 bucks a pop



and then assume great seats about 20 rows from the field just outside the third base bag. It was a glorious day for a baseball game, as the Royals outlasted the hometown Tigers by a score of 2-1, staving off a Detroit rally in the bottom of the 9th which produced the Tigers' only run and ended with the bases loaded. We also got to see Miggy record career hit No. 2984 after going 0-for-3 and hitting into a double play in his first three at-bats.



Sunday was probably my fifth or sixth visit to Comerica Park, and each time I visit I like it more and more. Not only do the Tigers continue to add great historical pennants and kiosks and other accoutrements to the inside of the complex, but I hadn't before realized what a great view of the Detroit skyline one has from the third baseline seats, probably second only to the view from PNC Park. Downtown Detroit is thriving, as we saw several cranes erecting

new skyscrapers in the heart of downtown, and continuing to revive the urban core of this aged Motor City.



Detroit's skyline view from third base line

After the game, we walked over to Greektown for a little bit of dinner and a couple of cold ones at the Golden Fleece Restaurant, and got a little bit distracted and failed to pay close enough attention to the time.



Greektown in Detroit -- HOPA!

When we decided it was time to hightail it to the airport for our flight home, we hadn't really accounted for the fact that a full stadium of Detroit Lions fans would be emptying out of Ford Field and simultaneously competing for the same roadways out of the inner city. Adding one more obstacle to the occasion, once we got to our parking garage and our vehicle, we learned that the exit gate wasn't working, and so we ended up sitting in our vehicle for about 20 more minutes until one impatient Detroiters took it upon himself to lift the gate up and allow all of the vehicles to exit the parking facility.

Spoiler alert: We missed our scheduled flight home on United, thanks in no small part to the abject apathy of our Enterprise rental bus driver who, for some unexplained reason, decided not to tell us that her particular bus did not go to the United terminal, until after we were already at the other terminal. The happy ending is that we suddenly had three more hours to

play Spades and Hearts at the airport, and we were able to catch a later flight home that same night on Delta.<sup>7</sup> All in all, another great Husker road trip with the lads, in spite of the brutal loss to the Spartans.

### THE TRIP 2022

You may have noticed that the Major League schedules for 2022 have already come out, and so we will soon be making some suggestions about the 2022 HSL Trip. In trying to finish off our goal of visiting every major league city and ballpark, we are shooting for one or more games next year to the Oakland Coliseum, to Safeco Field in Seattle, to Chase Field in Phoenix and/or to the Tropicana in Tampa Bay. So stay tuned.

Of course, as always, we will probably meet some resistance from a few of you in trying to organize this little HSL adventure, including Underbelly, who has been rumored to be pushing for us to reconsider his proposal for The Hot League junket to Branson. Below was his rationale in August 1995:

#### BOB'Z TOP TEN REEZINS FOR TAKEEN NECTS YEER'S HSL TRYP TO BRAN-SUN

10. Kan stay at Roy Klark's Buteeful Lodje ov the Ozarcs.
9. Mi traylor parc gave mee 10 free passes to Minny Purl's show.
8. I no Jon Cruk and he runz the Tilta-Worl.
7. Fun two watch HilbileeZ witling baseball batz.
6. Cheep moter couch fair frum Omahah--and 27 hourz to play cards en root!
5. Se'en Elvas personatur bettur then unacysted tripul play.
4. I kin winn a spieling bea thair.
3. Pe-pul there dont ware stinking fezzuz.
2. All U Kan Eat gritz and gravey at the Pos-some Haus.
1. We kan stay at my knew trayler home there: Weezul's Nest.

\* \* \* \* \*

That will be a wrap for this issue of *From the Bullpen*. Have a great weekend.

Skipper

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<sup>7</sup> But to be clear, it was not free. A little bit of marital and other capital burned up in the process.