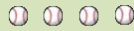


NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE



SEASON XXXVII



2020 HSL Champion
West Des Moines Cubs
Manager: Shamu

400

FROM THE BULLPEN

2021 Campaign

Edition No. 23

October 8, 2021

Brethren:

DEM BUMS WIN!

Albeit with a rather anticlimactic final day of the season, Tricko's **Bums** avoided a cataclysmic collapse and staved off a fast and furious finish by the hard-charging **Cubs** and their tireless manager, Shamu.¹ After seeing his once chasmic lead shaved down to adolescent stubble by last Friday just ahead of the final weekend of the season, Magpie's stouthearted **Bums** put together a blockbuster of a day on Saturday just as Shamu's **Cubs** displayed their feet of clay, mustering up only 4.5 points (to 89.0 points for Tricko's **Bums**) to give up the ghost.

In fact, it's worth taking a look at the daily point totals of both the **Bums** and the **Cubs** from earlier that week, as follows:




Team	Date	Hitters' Points	Pitchers' Points	Total Points
Bums	Wed. 9/29	30.1	59.0	89.1
Cubs		43.8	66.5	110.3
Bums	Thurs. 9/30	17.2	12.0	29.2
Cubs		33.8	1.0	34.8
Bums	Fri. 10/1	54.8	31.0	85.8
Cubs		48.0	58.0	106
Bums	Sat. 10/2	53.0	36.0	89.0
Cubs		9.5	-5.0	4.5
Bums	Sun. 10/3	29.4	33.0	62.4
Cubs		24.5	31.0	55.5

¹ Who, by the way, is resting quietly at an undisclosed sanitarium at an undisclosed location in South-western Iowa.

Anyhow, it was a whale of a finish, with Tricko "The Great White" winning it all and Charles "Call me Ishmael" Sinclair finishing a very close second.

Oh, yes, and hearty congratulations also to Saint Trumpetfish for claiming the third and last money spot, allowing him to retain his top *one percenter* status.

Here are the final standings from top to bottom:

Rank	Team	Points	Pts Back
1	Bums 	12573.8	-
2	Cubs 	12450.2	123.6
3	Saints 	12258.5	315.3
4	Skipjacks	11895.4	678.4
5	Monarchs	11843.3	730.5
6	Bears	11739.3	834.5
7	Wahoos	11687.2	886.6
8	Bombers	11615.9	957.9
9	Tribe	11454.1	1119.7
10	Redbirds	11036.0	1537.8
11	Tigers	10841.0	1732.8
12	Senators	10439.7	2134.1
13	Blues	10277.4	2296.4

WEEK 26

The **Bears** led all comers during Week 26 with 520.1 points, followed by the **Monarchs** with 500.5 points.

Rank	Team	Pts.
1	Bears	520.1
2	Monarchs	500.5
3	Cubs	473.3
4	Tribe	449.3
5	Wahoos	449.1
6	Bums	438.1
7	Skipjacks	428.4
8	Saints	422.5
9	Bombers	407.5
10	Blues	338.9

11	Tigers	322.3
12	Senators	283.1
13	Redbirds	280.4

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Here are the Who's Hot and Who's Not lists for pitchers and hitters during the final week of the season:

WHO'S HOT - PITCHING

1.	Walker Buehler	Skipjacks	62.0
2.	Charlie Morton	Cubs	51.0
3.	Reiver Sanmartin	Cubs	49.0
4.	Tyler Alexander	Tribe	41.0
5.	Alek Manoah	Bears	40.0
	Josiah Gray	Bears	40.0
7.	Logan Webb	Bums	39.0
8.	Michael Wacha	Wahoos	38.0
9.	Jordan Lyles	Monarchs	37.0
10.	Ranger Suárez	Bears	36.0
11.	Julio Urías	Tigers	34.0
12.	Max Fried	Cubs	33.0
	Nathan Eovaldi	Bombers	33.0
14.	José Urquidy	Redbirds	30.0
15.	Tanner Houck	Bears	29.0
16.	Steven Matz	Saints	28.0
17.	Lance McCullers Jr.	Redbirds	27.0
	Jesús Luzardo	Saints	27.0
	Tylor Megill	Bears	27.0
20.	Alexander Wells	Bombers	26.0
21.	Zac Gallen	Saints	25.0
	Chris Stratton	Tribe	25.0
	Frankie Montas	Cubs	25.0
24.	Kevin Gausman	Saints	24.0
	Drew Rasmussen	Blues	24.0

WHO'S NOT - PITCHING

1.	Antonio Senzatela	Senators	-20.0
2.	Jordan Montgomery	Saints	-14.0
3.	Aaron Ashby	Monarchs	-7.0
4.	Erick Fedde	Blues	-5.0

5.	Dane Dunning	Skipjacks	-4.0
	Daniel Lynch	Blues	-4.0
	Tarik Skubal	Saints	-4.0
8.	Clayton Kershaw	Senators	-3.0
	Cristian Javier	Tribe	-3.0
	Jackson Kowar	Tribe	-3.0
11.	Tyler Mahle	Saints	-1.0
	Corbin Burnes	Redbirds	-1.0
	Carlos Carrasco	Redbirds	-1.0

WHO'S HOT - HITTING

1.	George Springer	Saints	56.5
2.	Brandon Lowe	Tribe	53.6
3.	Corey Seager	Wahoos	53.3
4.	Byron Buxton	Tribe	52.0
5.	Trea Turner	Bums	50.0
	Bo Bichette	Skipjacks	50.0
7.	Mitch Haniger	Tigers	43.6
8.	Eugenio Suárez	Skipjacks	43.4
9.	Bryan Reynolds	Bears	41.0
10.	Jared Walsh	Senators	39.9
11.	Dylan Carlson	Monarchs	36.5
12.	Aaron Judge	Bombers	36.0
13.	AJ Pollock	Monarchs	35.0
14.	Tyler O'Neill	Monarchs	34.1
15.	Amed Rosario	Cubs	33.0
16.	Rafael Devers	Saints	32.6
17.	Salvador Perez	Cubs	32.5
18.	Pete Alonso	Skipjacks	32.3
19.	Josh Donaldson	Wahoos	31.9
20.	Rafael Ortega	Bums	31.5
21.	Trevor Story	Cubs	31.4
	Niko Goodrum	Tribe	31.4
23.	Justin Turner	Wahoos	30.7
24.	Francisco Lindor	Redbirds	30.6
25.	Michael Conforto	Tribe	30.1

WHO'S NOT - HITTING

1.	Lourdes Gurriel Jr.	Bums	-7.0
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2.	Josh Harrison	Blues	-4.3
3.	Evan Longoria	Senators	-3.4
4.	Garrett Hampson	Blues	-2.8
5.	Jean Segura	Tigers	-2.5
	Cedric Mullins	Bums	-2.5
7.	Yan Gomes	Skipjacks	-2.0
8.	Omar Narváez	Saints	-1.4
9.	Kyle Seager	Redbirds	-1.2
10.	Adam Duvall	Wahoos	-1.0
11.	Yadier Molina	Senators	-0.9

SKIP SEZ



Even with four of the top pitchers for the week (Charlie Morton, 51.0; Reiver Sanmartin, 49.0; Max Fried, 33.0; and Frankie Montas, 25.0) and three hitters in the Top 25 (Amed Rosario, 33.0; Salvador Perez, 32.5; and Trevor Story, 31.4), and the **Bums** only had 1 Top 25 pitcher and 2 Top 25 hitters, the **Cubs** came up just a little bit short (123.6 points).



Plaudits to SloPay and Screech for working their tails off all the way through the end of the season, as reflected in their league-leading Week 26 point totals of 520.1 and 500.5, respectively. One thing that sets our league above all others is the tenacity of every owner even when they no longer have a chance at a money finish, or even being able to move up in the standings. It's also what makes this league so competitive and so difficult to take home The Cup.

A RENO TALE

I don't know if any of you have been to Reno,² but until last Thursday, I had only been to the Reno airport for trips to Lake Tahoe and Squaw Valley. But when I had a deposition scheduled for San Diego on October 1, and found out from Linda that the Padres were playing out of town in the Bay area that weekend but that the Reno Aces had a home game on Thursday night and I could fly from Reno to San Diego in time for the deposition on Friday morning, the scheme was hatched. Using my finely-honed powers of persuasion, I pleaded, cajoled, whined and hectored HQ into making the junket with me, and we departed Omaha at O-Dark-Thirty on Thursday morning on Southwest, bound for Reno.

After arriving in Reno and checking into our commodious accommodations at the Hotel Jesse,³ we grabbed a sack of Roberto's tacos⁴ and made our way up to the quaint little northern California town of Truckee for the afternoon, and then made our way back to Reno to catch

² The *Biggest Little City in the World*.

³ A very cool boutique hotel found by Linda just blocks from the Reno strip, a refurbished old brick building with a fantastic bar and only six rentable rooms.

⁴ To die for, if you are ever in the area.

the start of the 6 p.m. game against the Los Angeles Aviators. As we walked the two blocks from the Jesse to the ballpark, Greater Nevada Field, I for one was giddy with anticipation over seeing a game in another new minor league cathedral, while HQ had her heart and mind fixed on a ridiculously-garnished hot dog and an icy cold cup of beer. Just then, as we encountered other fans exiting the park's grounds just as we entered them, we learned that they had just announced the cancellation of the game because two of the visiting Aviators had tested positive for COVID.

Crestfallen, but not entirely convinced, we sought official confirmation of the game cancellation from the ticket-taker at the closest entrance gate, and learned that the Aces-Aviators contest—the focal point of our side junket to Reno—had in fact been COVID-cancelled.

Disappointed, but not being the type to cry over spilled milk,⁵ we asked if we could still enter the ballpark without purchasing tickets and take a look around, and our usher genie granted this wish.

So we entered Greater Nevada Field, bought a few souvenirs from the gift shop, grabbed a hot dog and a few beers, and then helped ourselves to a couple of great seats right behind home plate where we commiserated with several other disappointed fans. As it turned out, HQ quite enjoyed the shock value of telling everyone and anyone who would listen that we came to Reno “all the way from Nebraska” just to see the ballgame, and then it got COVID-cancelled. If nothing else, a good story.

With a little bit of extra time on our hands, we thought to ourselves, “WWJD?”⁶ and decided to make a few charitable donations to local businesses, primarily the Silver Legacy Resort Casino. While HQ regaled three different blackjack dealers with our “We flew here all the way from Nebraska . . .” story, I quickly and liberally sprinkled around a not-inconsiderable sum⁷ of money in selfless furtherance of the local economy.

Our work then done, we skedaddled faster than Quickdraw McGraw back to the Jesse for a bit of revelry with the locals and a nightcap before retiring relatively early in anticipation of our pre-daybreak flight to San Diego.

As they say, *Life is a daring adventure, or nothing at all.*⁸



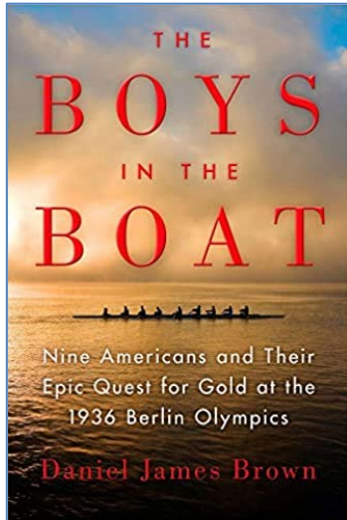
⁵ Spilled beer, yes.

⁶ *What Would Johnny Do?*

⁷ By my standards, that is; probably about the same amount that Big Johnny routinely wagers at a single throw at the craps table.

⁸ Perhaps Helen Keller's best quote.

**BOOK REPORT:
THE BOYS IN THE BOAT
By Daniel James Brown**



I just finished a nice read called *The Boys in the Boat*, authored by Daniel James Brown, and published in 2013. I had been eyeing this book in the bookstores for a couple of years now, and finally picked it up and read it.

By my lights, *The Boys in the Boat* is a good if not great tale of nine young men on the University of Washington rowing team who set their sights on winning the National Collegiate Regatta in Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1936, and thereafter qualifying for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. The book focuses in particular on one of these nine boat boys, Joe Rantz, who was essentially abandoned by his father and stepmother when he was just a young lad at the tender age of 12, and who overcame the tallest of odds to make it to and through the University of Washington and have remarkable success on the Huskie crew.

In the early part of the twentieth century, the rowing elite in the United States were the Eastern schools such as Penn and Colgate, Columbia and Yale, Ivy League schools all, with the Navy Midshipmen thrown in for good measure. Oddly enough, both the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Washington in Seattle developed stellar rowing programs, mostly composed of sons of the working class, blue-collar types, in contrast to the sons of U.S. senators, doctors, lawyers and bankers who made up the crews of the Ivy League schools.

In any event, as Joe struggled to make and hold his position on the top Huskie nine-man crew team, he ultimately found himself to be undefeated throughout his college career, winning back-to-back national championships with the varsity Huskie team against the University of California and the Eastern rowing elite.

The Boys in the Boat does a laudable job of detailing how Hitler used the 1936 Olympic Summer Games to try to show the world that Germany was a country of clean, nice, polite, friendly, welcoming peoples and not the same war-mongers of Kaiser Wilhelm of the Great War who ran roughshod over Belgium, France and other peace-loving European countries. They took down the signs which denounced Jews and forbade Jews from using public facilities, and tamped down the most extreme Nazi newspapers. According to the book, it was all a guise to try to convince the United States and other world powers that this was a better, friendlier Teutonic regime that they had no reason to fear rearming for war and making another go at rewriting the map of Europe if not the world.

While the Washington Huskie eight-man crew team (with the coxswain with the bullhorn making it a total of nine) were the favorite to take gold at the 1936 Olympics (just as the crew team from the University of California-Berkeley had done in 1932), the Huskies were dealt a terrible hand by being assigned the outside and worst lane for the race, subject to the most

wind and turbulence, even though they had the fastest time trial and by custom should have had the inside, best lane. In addition, there was confusion at the start of the race, and the Huskie team was late getting out of the gate, and found itself dramatically behind most of the rest of the field right from the get-go.

In spite of their tremendous home court advantage,⁹ the Americans persevered and a tremendous push at the end allowed the Huskie crew to just nose out the German and Italian crew teams for the gold medal.

The after story is also good. These nine boys with their unparalleled work ethic all went on to serve the country in World War II and all had successful post-War careers, most of them in engineering. They also formed such a tight bond as a member of the team that they all kept in touch for the rest of their lives, typically having a reunion at least once a year, including a grand reunion every ten years when they replicated their rowing feat; culminating in the year 1986 when they celebrated the 50th anniversary of their gold medal by taking the old shell out for one more spin on Lake Washington in Seattle, this wonderful band of brothers now in their 70s.

All in all, another good story, well told. Skipper gives this one ★★★★★.

A NEW TOP TEN

Instead of regurgitating old Top Tens from the 1990s, in this issue we share with you a brand new one, entitled:

TOP TEN LIST OF SHAMU'S EXCUSES/REASONS FOR COMING IN SECOND IN 2021

10. Contracted e-coli from eating room-temperature Valentino's pizza stored in backpack for six weeks.
9. Vegas gamblers told him that **Bums** were to win or he would be wearing concrete nursing shoes.
8. PAwesome has already claimed 2021 as his 14th Hot Stove League title, so what's the use?
7. Promise of ecclesiastical conjugal relations on final weekend of play proved impossible to resist.
6. Those pinko lefties at Yahoo fantasy baseball failed to count all of his points.¹⁰

⁹ Including a huge throng of lusty Krauts shouting "Sieg Heill!" at the top of their lungs as they cheered on their Teutonic countrymen.

¹⁰ And Shamu's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, will soon be filing suit in U.S. District Court to overturn the results.

5. Racist baseball gods prefer aged white male Germans over aged white male Irishmen.
4. Shamu still exhausted from last 25-hour work week.¹¹
3. **Saints** owner told him he would *go to hell* if he won the title.¹²
2. With Jan trying to downsize, no room for the Cup in new Sinclair mini-house.



1. And the number 1 excuse/reason that Shamu did not win the 2021 HSL campaign:

Ain't no way he's buying pricey sports apparel AND dinner for 13 at Flemings!

NO MORE UNCERTAINTY

There were no winners and only one guess as to the origin of one of last issue's subheadings, *Uncertain the Final Run to Winter*. This is the title of one of Bill Kloefkorn's books of poetry, one which I hadn't thought about in years, but which title was lodged deep into the recesses of my memory banks and then suddenly popped forward when I was dictating last week's *Bullpen*.

Somewhere in my ratpack of hoarded materials, I have Bill's entire collection of poetry books, but it would take hours if not days or weeks for me to unearth them and take a look at the copyright, but I believe that *Uncertain the Final Run to Winter*, was one of his first published collections of poetry, probably self-published. I still remember the Kloefkorns and Berkas and

¹¹ Just before retiring in 2017.

¹² The exact same advice he gave to another competing HSL skipper in the late stages of the 2019 HSL campaign.

Ernsts and probably others getting together at the Kloefkorn residence and sorting and collating and stapling together the pages from some of Bill's early works of poetry.

I don't know if any of you have read any of our former state poet's elegant works, but he authored some really good stuff, most of which is a little too deep for my shallow brain pan. By far my favorite work of Friend Kloefkorn is a poem that he wrote for my parents after my dad died from pancreatic cancer in 1984 and my mom from complications of Hodgkin's disease in 1987, entitled *Because You Can't I Am*. Here it is:

BECAUSE YOU CAN'T I AM

--to the memory of Jack and Phyllis

Because you can't I am
walking through late October
for all of us,

kicking because you can't
the leaves, because you can't
inhaling the heavy heads of milo.

This morning measuring a line of sumac
I disappeared for all of us
because you can't

over the fiery rim
of a perfect prairie.
And because there is no trace of wind

I bend an ear because you can't
to hear against the earth
an echoing of footballs.

Now the word for the day is dusk,
and because you can't I am
moving in widening circles

beneath the cottonwood,
my eyes for all of us
at the gray horizon, my arms

prepared to lift because you can't
the weight of our inseparable
return.

And a handwritten note at the bottom of the poem:

*Yes, and because you can't I am
celebrating, with others,
your son Dan's graduation,
your daughter and your other son beside him,
all of us grateful to you
for yet another warm beginning.*

*Bill Kloefkorn
Lincoln, NE
Dec. 19, 1987*

These beautiful words from Bill bring tears to my eyes and invest a lump in my throat every time I read them, even now, 34 years later. This was the second poem that Bill wrote for my parents, the first one being in 1984 just days after my dad's death. I can still picture Bill at the altar¹³ at the American Lutheran Church in Lincoln near 48th and Vine Streets, reading the earlier poem at my dad's funeral service. One of those memories I hope to never forget.

NEXT ISSUE

- The Marvelous Mr. Magpie
- Ken Burns' Viet Nam

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Time to take this issue to press. Have a great weekend, and most of all, **GO BIG RED!**

Skipper

¹³ Not particularly a favorite of Bill's places to be—he vastly preferred firepits, sumac fields and canoes to the company of churches.