

# FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Newsletter of the

## NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

2023: Our 39th Season

Edition No. 28



September 21, 2023

### OWNERS:

**Ted Bridges**  
("PAwesome")  
Wahoos  
Returning Champion

**Jeff Bechtolt**  
("Screech")  
Monarchs

**Jon Blongewicz**  
("Sunny")  
Blues

**Denny Bontrager**  
("SloPay")  
Bears

**Jim Buser**  
("Tirebiter")  
Redbirds

**Rick Drews**  
("Big Guy")  
Tigers

**Dave Ernst**  
("Skipper")  
Senators

**Bob Hurlbut**  
("Underbelly")  
Tribe

**Scott Krause**  
("BT")  
Saints

**Mike Morris**  
("Mouse")  
Bombers

**Mitch Pirnie**  
("Magpie/Tricko")  
Bums

**Chuck Sinclair**  
("Shamu")  
Cubs

**John Thielen**  
("Itchie")  
Skipjacks

### STAFF:

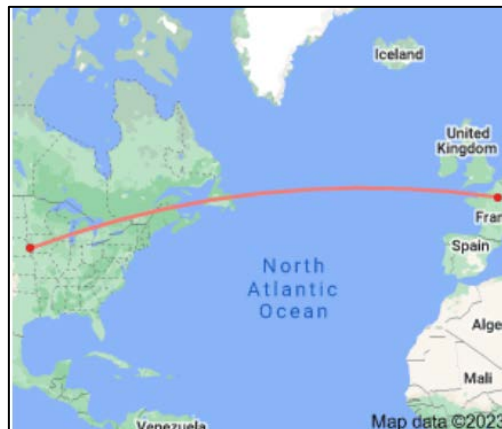
Publisher and Editor  
Dave Ernst

Webmaster and  
Assistant Editor  
Linda "Chief" Koftan

### WAHOOS STILL WINNING WHILE WINDING IT DOWN; SAINTS AND BUMS TRYING TO BURN RUBBER BUT MOSTLY STANDING STILL

Brethren:

Linda here. Today the Ernst clan will be enjoying a three and a half hour first class train ride from Paris to Geneva. And even though the Skipper is about 4500 miles from Homaha, you knew, didn't you, that he wouldn't let you all wait in vain for a few words from the press-room?



So here we go for the antepenultimate<sup>1</sup> weekly issue of the season of *From the Bullpen*, with all its attendant bells and whistles and even a Book Report in *absentia*. Enjoy.

### HSL STANDINGS THRU WEEK 25 ENDING SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

	Team	Points	PtsBack
1	Wahoos	11801.5	-
2	Saints	11658.5	143.0
3	Bums	11629.5	172.0
4	Monarchs	10955.9	845.6

<sup>1</sup> Surely, that is a Dave-worthy word. And don't call me Shirley. (Gotta love Leslie Nielsen.)

5	Cubs	10927.8	873.7
6	Bears	10721.4	1080.1
7	Tribe	10582.9	1218.6
8	Skipjacks	10531.3	1270.2
9	Blues	10404.7	1396.8
10	Bombers	10369.2	1432.3
11	Senators	10263.1	1538.4
12	Tigers	9872.1	1929.4
13	Redbirds	9545.7	2255.8

**POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 25**

	<b>Team</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1	Saints	562.3
2	Wahoos	532.3
3	Monarchs	518.3
4	Bums	516.1
5	Tribe	486.0
6	Senators	469.3
7	Cubs	447.2
8	Blues	381.1
9	Bombers	379.3
10	Bears	348.6
11	Redbirds	337.4
12	Tigers	271.6
13	Skipjacks	255.3

**TOP 25 PITCHERS**

	<b>Pitchers</b>	<b>Roster</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1.	Gerrit Cole	Bombers	694.0
2.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	663.0
3.	Blake Snell	Skipjacks	620.0
4.	Zac Gallen	Bears	618.0
5.	Luis Castillo	Blues	617.0
6.	Logan Webb	Tribe	605.0
7.	Justin Steele	Monarchs	595.0
	Pablo López	Saints	595.0
9.	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	591.0
10.	Zack Wheeler	Cubs	581.0
11.	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	578.0

12.	Corbin Burnes	Senators	574.0
13.	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	572.0
	Logan Gilbert	Bums	572.0
15.	Chris Bassitt	Senators	545.0
16.	Sonny Gray	Monarchs	538.0
17.	Freddy Peralta	Cubs	531.0
18.	Mitch Keller	Saints	530.0
19.	Kodai Senga	Redbirds	529.0
20.	George Kirby	Blues	514.0
21.	Max Scherzer	Senators	510.0
	José Berríos	Senators	510.0
23.	Kyle Bradish	Monarchs	507.0
	Jesús Luzardo	Saints	507.0
25.	Merrill Kelly	Tigers	500.0

#### WHO'S HOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Brandon Woodruff	Tribe	66.0
2.	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	55.0
3.	Patrick Corbin	Tribe	50.0
4.	Carlos Rodón	Skipjacks	43.0
	Lucas Giolito	Senators	43.0
6.	Gavin Williams	Senators	42.0
7.	Mitch Keller	Saints	41.0
8.	Sonny Gray	Monarchs	40.0
9.	Dylan Cease	Monarchs	39.0
	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	39.0
	Grayson Rodriguez	Bums	39.0
12.	Tarik Skubal	Saints	38.0
13.	Nick Pivetta	Bears	37.0
	Freddy Peralta	Cubs	37.0
	Blake Snell	Skipjacks	37.0
	Kodai Senga	Redbirds	37.0
	José Berríos	Senators	37.0
18.	Dane Dunning	Tribe	36.0
19.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	35.0
20.	Zack Littell	Blues	34.0

21.	Kenta Maeda	Senators	33.0
22.	Braxton Garrett	Saints	32.0
	Jordan Montgomery	Bums	32.0
	Tanner Houck	Senators	32.0
	José Quintana	Bombers	32.0

### WHO'S NOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Michael Wacha	Wahoos	-11.0
2.	Kyle Wright	Cubs	-10.0
3.	Andrew Heaney	Bears	-9.0
4.	Patrick Sandoval	Monarchs	-6.0
	Paul Blackburn	Tigers	-6.0
	Brady Singer	Saints	-6.0
	Zac Gallen	Bears	-6.0
	Dakota Hudson	Saints	-6.0
9.	J.P. France	Bums	-4.0
	Merrill Kelly	Tigers	-4.0
11.	Jon Gray	Wahoos	-3.0
	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	-3.0
	Yusei Kikuchi	Redbirds	-3.0
	Ryne Nelson	Skipjacks	-3.0
15.	Brandon Williamson	Blues	-2.0
16.	Javier Assad	Skipjacks	-1.0
	Zack Wheeler	Cubs	-1.0

### TOP 25 HITTERS

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	807.5
2.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	747.4
3.	Mookie Betts	Bombers	731.8
4.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	721.7
5.	Juan Soto	Saints	618.0
6.	Marcus Semien	Cubs	613.1
7.	Austin Riley	Saints	592.9
8.	Julio Rodríguez	Bears	590.3

9.	Kyle Tucker	Monarchs	585.1
10.	Bobby Witt Jr.	Bums	581.2
11.	Corey Seager	Tribe	574.6
12.	Alex Bregman	Bums	570.2
13.	Corbin Carroll	Bears	569.0
14.	Kyle Schwarber	Wahoos	567.7
15.	Rafael Devers	Monarchs	560.4
16.	Francisco Lindor	Monarchs	560.2
17.	Pete Alonso	Bums	559.1
18.	Ketel Marte	Saints	546.1
19.	José Ramírez	Tribe	538.3
20.	Trea Turner	Blues	536.3
21.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	536.2
22.	Paul Goldschmidt	Cubs	535.5
23.	Yandy Díaz	Bums	526.5
24.	Nathaniel Lowe	Bums	525.5
25.	Christian Walker	Redbirds	523.8

#### WHO'S HOT – HITTING

	<b>Batters</b>	<b>Roster</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1.	Juan Soto	Saints	61.1
2.	Luis Arraez	Bums	49.0
3.	Rafael Devers	Monarchs	48.9
4.	Michael Harris II	Bombers	46.0
5.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	44.6
6.	Royce Lewis	Monarchs	42.0
7.	Gunnar Henderson	Blues	40.8
8.	Robbie Grossman	Cubs	40.5
9.	Bobby Witt Jr.	Bums	40.3
10.	Austin Riley	Saints	37.6
11.	Fernando Tatis Jr.	Saints	37.5
12.	Jake Burger	Senators	37.4
13.	Corey Seager	Tribe	36.7
14.	Jazz Chisholm Jr.	Monarchs	36.5
15.	Josh Naylor	Monarchs	35.7
16.	Edouard Julien	Bums	34.7
17.	Mark Canha	Bums	34.5
18.	Bryce Harper	Tigers	34.2
19.	Trea Turner	Blues	34.1
	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	34.1
21.	Tommy Pham	Wahoos	32.2

22.	Michael Massey	Skipjacks	31.9
23.	Willy Adames	Cubs	31.4
24.	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	Blues	31.3
25.	Kris Bryant	Bombers	31.0

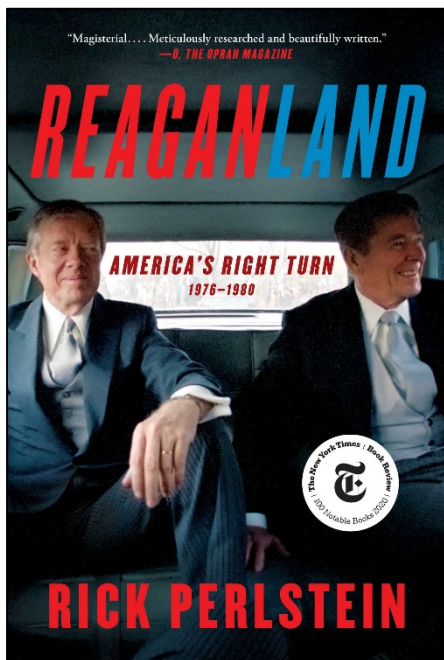
### WHO'S NOT – HITTING

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Connor Wong	Bombers	-6.8
2.	Alex Verdugo	Blues	-5.4
3.	Tommy Edman	Redbirds	-4.4
4.	Masataka Yoshida	Skipjacks	-4.0
5.	Henry Davis	Monarchs	-3.5
6.	Anthony Santander	Skipjacks	-3.0
7.	Adam Duvall	Skipjacks	-2.0
	Will Benson	Bombers	-2.0
9.	Michael Brantley	Skipjacks	-1.9
10.	Luis Robert Jr.	Blues	-1.5
	George Springer	Bears	-1.5
12.	Sean Murphy	Tigers	-1.4
13.	Drew Waters	Blues	-1.0
14.	Tyler Stephenson	Tribe	-0.3

### BOOK REPORT:

### REAGANLAND: AMERICA'S RIGHT TURN 1976-1980

By Rick Perlstein



I finally finished *Reaganland: America's Right Turn 1976-1980* by Rick Perlstein, the fourth and final book in his tour de force about America's veer to conservatism and the politicization of fundamentalist Christians, the so-called Moral Majority of Jerry Falwell and his ilk.

Meticulously researched and deliciously articulated—Perlstein can turn a phrase like no other—*Reaganland* takes one through the four years of the Jimmy Carter administration beginning in 1976 and covers in amazing detail the presidential campaign between Carter and Ronald Reagan and John Anderson, resulting in a Reagan electoral college landslide.

There was a lot that I didn't know about Jimmy Carter prior to reading this book, such as not only was he considered one of the weakest presidents of the 20th century, but he also had to be one of the unluckiest ones. Just about everything that *could* go wrong during his tenure as POTUS *would* go wrong, and he had no idea how to fix it. I also didn't know that he was perceived

as being quite mean at the end by a lot of journalists who covered him while he was president, particularly when he was campaigning.

One thing that I absolutely did not know about Carter was that he was actually in favor of erecting a partial border fence—referred to by some as the ‘Tortilla Curtain’—to keep Mexicans from entering the United States illegally, while Reagan the conservative took the exact opposite position. I know, makes no sense at all, right?

Anyway, a fantastic book, but 914 pages long, so if you want to read it, it is a commitment.

### **AND THAT’S NOT ALL.**

Finally, a wonderful article about my favorite troubadour, Jimmy Buffett, by journalist Maureen Dowd. If this doesn’t bring a tear to your eye, you are not a living, breathing soul. Hope you enjoy it.

Skipper

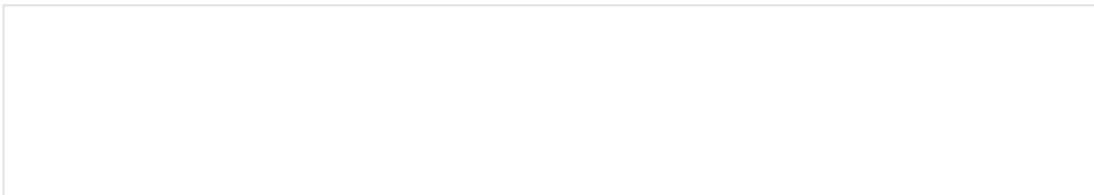
MAUREEN DOWD

# Living and Dying in $\frac{3}{4}$ Time

Sept. 9, 2023



**By Maureen Dowd**  
Opinion Columnist



WASHINGTON — Whenever I take my young researchers on celebrity interviews, I give them the Warning: No matter how well you hit it off, don't feel bad if you ever run into the stars again and they act as though they don't know you. That's usually how it goes. Think of them as elusive, shimmering creatures from another planet.

One of the few exceptions to this rule was Jimmy Buffett.

I don't think I ever met anyone as warm. He had no airs. One night, Carl Hulse, our chief Washington correspondent, and I were out at dinner with him here — he loved to pump us for the latest info — and an inebriated woman interrupted him and declared, "You're not Jimmy Buffett!" With that euphoric smile that could light up an arena, he pulled out his driver's license for her.

Maybe he liked reporters because he started as a journalist, writing for *Billboard* magazine. He thought of himself as a writer — not only of songs but also of best-selling books; he was one of just a few to scale both the fiction and nonfiction lists at *The Times*. It was more than that, though. He was blessed with an irresistible Southern, devil-may-care charm. Usually, *joie de vivre* is a sign you're not paying attention. But with Jimmy, it was ensorcelling. I went with him to Walter Reed medical center when he sang for wounded Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. He was able to transport them to a beach with no cares. During the Covid years, he did "cabin fever Zooms" with health care workers from across the country who were Parrotheads.

We both loved pirates, mermaids, jukeboxes and the glamorous era of Pan Am flight attendants, and we built a friendship on those mythical objects. When I asked him when his birthday was, so I could send him a Pan Am sweatshirt I'd found, he replied: "I'll give you a



hint. Same day as the baby in the manger, but I was not born in a manger. I was born in Pascagoula.” As he was dying, said his brother-in-law, the writer Tom McGuane, he was talking about going home to Pascagoula, Miss.



A selfie of Jimmy Buffett with Maureen Dowd.

His druggie past was not something to emulate, although he said he had no regrets. As he sang in “He Went to Paris,” “Some of it’s magic, some of it’s tragic, but I had a good life all the way.” But in one sense at least, he was a model for how to live: Build your life around what you love. When he was a young scalawag, he found the Life Aquatic and conjured his art from it, making Key West the capital of Margaritaville. He didn’t waste away there; he spun a billion-dollar empire out of a shaker of salt. What could be more American than that?

In the end, having packed a thousand lifetimes into one, he was a model for how to die.

“Well, I have learned one thing from my latest in a series of the ever-appearing speed bumps of life — 75 is NOT the new 50,” he emailed me. “Thinking younger doesn’t quite do it. You still have to do the hard work of, as the Toby Keith song says, ‘Don’t let the old man in.’ And that is my job now, the way I see it.”

Some stars are such natural performers, they don't look as though they're working very hard. Cary Grant and Marilyn Monroe never won Oscars. Jimmy was not garlanded with awards. He sent me his thoughts on that last April, on the occasion of "Margaritaville" being enshrined as "culturally significant" in the Library of Congress, sharing what he had told Howard Cohen, a Miami Herald reporter.

Jimmy loved the Library of Congress and visited it often back in the days when he was working on a musical, "Don't Stop the Carnival," with Herman Wouk, holed up at Wouk's house in Georgetown. (The musical had a brief run in Miami in 1997.)

"I have always loved books, reading and libraries, a gift from my mother," Jimmy said. "The Library of Congress is a monumental treasure you don't have to dig up; you just walk in the door of American history. 'Margaritaville' in the Library of Congress. I just have to giggle, but with pride. I haven't received many awards in my profession, but I am OK with that. I think the best reward for a performer is to please the audience."

He offered the story of how he came to write his biggest hit: "I started writing it on a napkin in a Mexican restaurant in Austin, Texas, with a friend who was driving me to the airport, to fly home to Key West. On the drive down the Keys, there was a fender bender on the Seven Mile Bridge, west of Marathon, and I was stuck, overlooking Pigeon Key. I sat on the bridge for about an hour and finished the song there. That night, I played it for the first time at my job at Crazy Ophelia's on Duval Street. The small crowd in the bar asked me to play it again. And I did. So, I guess it is a pretty good three-minute song that has stood the test of time."

He was well-read but unpretentious. When I told him I was getting my master's in English at Columbia University, he dryly asked, "Did 'y'all' ever make it into the English books?" One of his favorite signoffs was "Let's ketchup soon." I wrote to tell him about a course at Columbia on grammar and syntax called The Comma Sutra. "I need it, and maybe one on semicolons," he replied. "Would that then be semicolonography? JB."

A passionate Democrat — I met him through Caroline Kennedy — Jimmy despised Donald Trump but made sure his shows were "an oasis" for fans of any political stripe.

Privately, he referred to the Trump era as "the Big Cheeto Follies" and told me he hoped I was "having fun sticking pins into the Trump voodoo doll." Watching "My Octopus Teacher" on Netflix during the pandemic, Jimmy noted — with an octopus emoji — that the inquisitive cephalopod in the film was "way smarter than Trump."

Jimmy asked if the Trump impeachment for demanding a quid pro quo from Ukraine would be "the rotten piece of bait that finally hooks this sleazy bottom feeder? I hope so. Smart people seem to learn from their mistakes and move on. Something the bottom feeder never got."

When Trump trundled back into the arena in 2022, Jimmy recoiled: “He never figured out that no show lasts forever, and it looks like this will be the last season, thank God.” Always the optimist.



Associated Press

He wrote happily about “Uncle Joe”: “Looks like I am welcome back at this White House. I have known Joe a long time, and his favorite song is ‘Come Monday.’ I am honored. OK, sun’s up, and the wind is down. Off to surf. JB.”

His texts and emails came from many locales in paradise — St. Barth’s, Sag Harbor, Palm Beach, Paris and Cojímar, a small fishing village in Cuba.

But in the last couple of years, he often wrote from less exotic places, Boston and Houston, where he was being treated for an aggressive form of skin cancer, Merkel cell carcinoma. (Was there a price for trademarking the sun? Even so, I bet he wouldn’t have changed a thing.) He stayed upbeat on the “juice,” as he called his infusions to treat the cancer, and spoke proudly about his “all-female doctor team dedicated to keeping the old man out” on

the road. He would say he had to “go into the pits for some adjustments” and reassure me that he was getting “weller.” He called it an irritation, a Southern fingernail on an English chalkboard.

He said he was burrowing in at his Sag Harbor house with his wife, Janie, and his kids and dogs. His younger sister, Laurie, who also was battling cancer, came around. He loved having his band members over to play music, calling it “therapeutic to me.” He talked about bingeing on “The White Lotus” and sent the titles of new songs he was working on that were so Jimmy: “Conch Fritters and Red Wine,” “Fish Porn” and “My Gummy Just Kicked In,” which featured a turn by his Hamptons pal Paul McCartney.

Jimmy urged me to keep after the bad guys. “Keep trolling out there; as a longtime fisherman, I can say with some authority, you never know what is going to wind up on the end of your rod. Fins up and see you soon.”