

# FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Newsletter of the

## NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

2023: Our 39th Season

Edition No. 1

January 5, 2023

### OWNERS:

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

**Jeff Bechtolt**  
("Screech")  
King Billies

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

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

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

**Rick Drews**  
("Big Guy")  
Red Ball Jets

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

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

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

**Mike Morris**  
("Mouse")  
The Huskers

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

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

**John Thielen**  
("Itchie")  
DFL

### STAFF:

Publisher and Editor  
Dave Ernst

Webmaster and  
Assistant Editor  
Linda "Chief" Koftan

Gentlemen:

Happy 2023 to all, and welcome to the 39th season of competition of the Hot Stove League of Nebraska. Opening Day this season is Thursday, March 30, 2023, which will find the Ernst boys and Brother Sunny in Beantown for the Red Sox opener against the surprise team of 2022, the Baltimore Orioles. All who would like to join us is welcome. The more the merrier.

Our defending champion owner, PAwesome, has declared Sunday, March 26, as Draft Day, starting at noon. However, Brother Mouse will be out of the country that weekend, and many of us will be recognizing the Sabbath that day, so it figures that we will be moving the Funnest Day of the Year to some other date. More later on that.

The date of our annual Winter Meeting is still up in the air—still waiting for PAwesome to provide us with potential dates and a place and other details. Stay tuned.

### BASEBALL TRIVIA

Courtesy of my January-February edition of *Baseball Digest*:

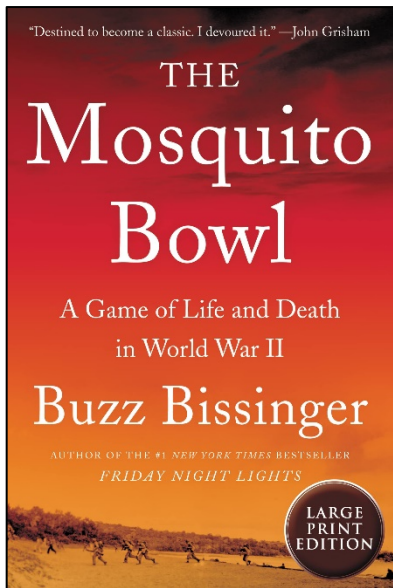
What pair of brothers, pitcher and hitter, faced each other in the 2022 post-season, the first time ever that a pitcher on one team has faced a hitter on another team in a postseason matchup?

Previously, five sets of brothers had played against each other in the post-season, but all of these were position players: Henry Johnson of the Brooklyn Dodgers against Doc Johnson of the Cleveland Indians in the 1920 World Series; Bob Meusel of the New York Yankees against Irish Meusel of the New York Giants in the 1921, '22 and '23 World Series; Clete Boyer of the Yankees against Ken Boyer of the Cardinals in the 1964 World Series; Garth Iorg of the Toronto Blue Jays against Dane Iorg of the Kansas City Royals in the 1985 ALCS; and Roberto Alomar of the Orioles against Sandy Alomar, Jr. of the Cleveland Indians in the 1996 ALDS and the 1997 ALCS.

If you know the answer to this trivia question, send it to the group at large by a reply email to the email which accompanied this *From the Bullpen*.



BOOK REPORT:  
*The Mosquito Bowl:*  
*A Game of Life and Death in World War II*  
by Buzz Bissinger



I recently finished an excellent book by Buzz Bissinger, author of *Friday Night Lights* and a number of other excellent reads, titled *The Mosquito Bowl: A Game of Life and Death in World War II*, published by Harper Collins in 2022. It is a fast, easy and good read.

The premise of *The Mosquito Bowl* is a football game that took place on Guadalcanal on Christmas Eve of 1944 between the 29th and 4th Regiments of the Sixth Marine Division between a number of former college football players, including All Conference and All American players from Purdue, Wisconsin, Notre Dame, Cornell and California, among others. Several of these players had been team captains at their respective schools, and sixteen of them had already been drafted or would receive offers from the National Football League.

The participants in the Mosquito Bowl were preparing for the invasion of Okinawa, which would take place beginning in April 1945, and which was one of the bloodiest and most brutal battles of World War II. Of the sixty-five men who played in the football game that day, fifteen were killed in Okinawa and more than fifty percent were casualties. One of the fortunate survivors of the Battle of Okinawa who played in the Mosquito Bowl was Hank Bauer, who went on to play for the Yankees and managed the 1966 Orioles to a World Series win. Although I no longer have it, my dad had an old Hank Bauer-style autographed glove which I wish like heck I had kept. But I digress.

Bissinger does a credible job of describing the gruesomeness of the Battle of Okinawa and the ferocity of the Japanese soldiers, who were taught virtually from the cradle that surrender was dishonorable and death in battle the only acceptable option. Many of the Marines who attacked the entrenched islands of Okinawa were sitting ducks as they came in from their transport ships to attack the waiting Japanese, who were often waiting in hidden caves and underground bunkers. In all, this battle (*Operation Iceberg*) which was a prelude to a planned invasion of the Japanese homeland lasted a total of eighty-two days, from April 1 to June 22, 1945. It is estimated that as many as 110,000 Japanese soldiers died in combat in Okinawa. Of the Allied deaths, the greatest number was not of the Marines engaged in ground combat but Naval officers and seamen, who accounted for 4900 deaths and roughly 4,824 wounded or missing. The Japanese flew an estimated 3700 sorties during the Okinawa campaign, the large number of these being kamikaze attacks, damaging more than 200 Allied vessels stationed in and around Okinawa.

As previously reported in this organ (March 17, 2017, Edition No. 5), my dad was stationed aboard LST ("Landing Ship Tank") 802 which on April 17, 1945 was the first LST to beach on the east side of the Okinawa Islands. While he was not injured in battle, more than a few LSTs were attacked in the Battle of Okinawa, including LST 884 which was the victim of a kamikaze attack on April 1<sup>1</sup> and scuttled on May 6; and LST 447 which was obliterated by kamikazes back

<sup>1</sup> Resulting in 24 deaths and 21 seamen wounded.



on April 6, 1945.<sup>2</sup> I would imagine that it was terrifying being located anywhere in the Theater at that time.



One of the things that motivated Bissinger to research and write this book was his discovery that his own father was in the Marines as part of the invading force, something that he said his dad never talked about, like many of these brave warriors. While he did not even know if his father had ever been fired upon or even discharged his own weapon during the Battle of Okinawa, and while Bissinger made it clear that he was not touting his father as a “hero” or trying to exaggerate his part in the battle, in his forward to the book he put it extremely well. He said that his father was not a “war hero;” he was a *hero* because he was *in* the war. Well said.

Anyway, if you are looking for a good read, I commend the novel *The Mosquito Bowl* to each of you, and I am happy to give you my copy if you are interested.

That’s all for now. Keep the faith, brethren.

Skipper

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<sup>2</sup> Resulting in 5 deaths and the wounding of 17 Naval personnel.

