

FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Newsletter of the

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

2023: Our 39th Season

Edition No. 12



May 12, 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

I. BUOYANT BOIDS BOUNCE INTO 2ND;
SKIPJACKS SOAR; CUBS CRUMBLE

Gentlemen:

The story for Week 6 in the Hot Stove League was Jim Ed's **Red-birds**, who pounded out 563.4 points to lead the league for the week, allowing his **Crimson Chirpers** to peck their way into 2nd place, just 82.5 points behind the **Saints**. Close behind were the **Skipjacks**, who amassed 538.1 points for the week to skip into 6th place, a mere 143.0 points off the pace.

At the other end of the spectrum, the previously white-hot **Cubs** cooled off just a bit, scoring a league-worst 310.2 points for the week, far behind the 12th-place **Bears** with 357.1 points.

Here are the standings through Week 6, together for the point totals for the week:

HSL STANDINGS THRU WEEK 6
ENDING MAY 7, 2023

	Team	Points	Pts Back
1	Saints	2659.2	-
2	Redbirds	2576.7	82.5
3	Wahoos	2568.6	90.6
4	Cubs	2566.5	92.7
5	Bums	2541.1	118.1
6	Skipjacks	2516.2	143.0
7	Bombers	2478.9	180.3
8	Monarchs	2380.4	278.8
9	Blues	2364.5	294.7
10	Tigers	2350.4	308.8
11	Senators	2347.2	312.0
12	Bears	2331.8	327.4
13	Tribe	2021.2	638.0



POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 6

	Team	Pts
1	Redbirds	563.4
2	Skipjacks	538.1
3	Saints	489.0
4	Senators	468.1
5	Blues	461.8
6	Bums	433.0
7	Monarchs	429.6
8	Tigers	416.3
9	Bombers	400.9
10	Wahoos	386.1
11	Tribe	360.2
12	Bears	357.1
13	Cubs	310.2

INDIVIDUAL STUFF

Gerrit Cole of the **Bombers** is unsurprisingly the top pitcher of the season with 212.0 points, but Joe Ryan of the **Tribe** is quite surprisingly in 2nd place with 187.0 points.

Two players named Bryce, but neither with the last name Harper, were near the top of the “Who’s Hot – Pitching” list for the week, with Bryce Miller of the **Saints** notching 64.0 points and Bryce Elder of the **Redbirds** chiming in with 49.0 points. Some cat named Mason Miller of the **Tribe** was the 5th hottest pitcher of the week with 46.0 points, while Polish sensation Hayden Wesneski boosted the **Monarchs** by 44.0 points, and somebody named Bailey Ober *overachieved* for the **Skipjacks** to the tune of 36.0 points.

In the hitting department, to no one’s surprise Ronald Acuña Jr. leads the circuit with 179.9 points, with the **Saints’** Randy Arozarena illogically holding his own with 164.6 points.

In the “Who’s Hot – Hitting” department, the **Tigers’** Shawn Murphy had another banner week with 52.4 points to pace the league, while the **Saints’** “Jesus is Lourdes” Gurriel Jr. has worked another miracle for the altar-hugging owner of the **Saints** franchise, BT “Foot of the Cross” Krause.

I would be remiss if I did not point out that the **Saints** have maintained their toehold on 1st place in the league despite having not one, not two, but three pitchers in the “Who’s Not – Pitching” leaderboard with Braxton Garrett at minus 24 points, Roansy (duh) Contreras at minus 6 points, and Brady “I Wanna” Singer at minus 5 points.

And here are the leaderboards from top to bottom:

TOP 25 PITCHERS

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Gerrit Cole	Bombers	212.0
2.	Joe Ryan	Tribe	187.0
3.	Shane McClanahan	Blues	184.0
4.	Justin Steele	Monarchs	183.0
5.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	179.0
6.	Shohei Ohtani	Redbirds	178.0
	Zac Gallen	Bears	178.0
8.	Clayton Kershaw	Cubs	168.0
9.	Eduardo Rodriguez	Senators	164.0
	Sonny Gray	Bombers	164.0
11.	Luis Castillo	Blues	149.0
	Bryce Elder	Redbirds	149.0
13.	Nathan Eovaldi	Wahoos	146.0
14.	Anthony DeSclafani	Skipjacks	145.0
	Marcus Stroman	Tigers	145.0
16.	Julio Urías	Saints	140.0
	Mitch Keller	Saints	140.0
	Shane Bieber	Skipjacks	140.0
19.	Pablo López	Saints	138.0
20.	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	137.0
	Dustin May	Blues	137.0
22.	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	133.0
23.	Yusei Kikuchi	Redbirds	132.0
	Jacob deGrom	Bears	132.0
25.	Alex Cobb	Cubs	127.0

WHO'S HOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Bryce Miller	Saints	64.0
2.	Cal Quantrill	Redbirds	54.0
3.	Julio Urías	Saints	49.0
	Bryce Elder	Redbirds	49.0
5.	Mason Miller	Tribe	46.0
6.	Domingo Germán	Bears	45.0
7.	Hayden Wesneski	Monarchs	44.0
8.	Blake Snell	Bombers	43.0
	Eduardo Rodriguez	Senators	43.0
10.	Joe Ryan	Tribe	42.0
11.	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	41.0
12.	Anthony DeSclafani	Skipjacks	37.0



	Merrill Kelly	Tigers	37.0
14.	Bailey Ober	Skipjacks	36.0
15.	Nathan Eovaldi	Wahoos	35.0
	Michael Kopech	Tigers	35.0
	Drew Smyly	Bombers	35.0
18.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	34.0
19.	Dustin May	Blues	33.0
20.	Mark Leiter Jr.	Tribe	32.5
21.	Alex Cobb	Cubs	32.0
22.	Sandy Alcantara	Bums	31.0
	Tyler Wells	Skipjacks	31.0
	Shane McClanahan	Blues	31.0
	Yu Darvish	Wahoos	31.0

WHO'S NOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Braxton Garrett	Saints	-24.0
2.	Brad Keller	Blues	-16.0
3.	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	-15.0
4.	Martín Pérez	Tigers	-10.0
	Max Scherzer	Senators	-10.0
6.	Roansy Contreras	Saints	-6.0
7.	Brady Singer	Saints	-5.0
	Grayson Rodriguez	Bears	-5.0
	Brandon Pfaadt	Monarchs	-5.0
10.	Kyle Gibson	Monarchs	-4.0
	Gavin Stone	Tribe	-4.0
12.	Kyle Wright	Cubs	-3.0
13.	Clayton Kershaw	Cubs	-2.0
	Jordan Lyles	Bombers	-2.0

TOP 25 HITTERS

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	179.9
2.	Randy Arozarena	Saints	164.6
3.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	160.6
4.	Paul Goldschmidt	Cubs	160.4
5.	Yandy Díaz	Bums	158.9
6.	Matt Chapman	Cubs	157.0
7.	Marcus Semien	Cubs	153.7
8.	Sean Murphy	Tigers	153.0
9.	Bo Bichette	Bears	149.8
10.	Max Muncy	Wahoos	147.1



11.	Adolis García	Skipjacks	146.4
12.	Cody Bellinger	Tribe	146.2
13.	Mike Trout	Senators	145.7
14.	James Outman	Skipjacks	145.4
15.	Rafael Devers	Monarchs	145.3
16.	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	Blues	145.2
17.	Thairo Estrada	Saints	144.4
18.	Wander Franco	Blues	143.9
19.	Brent Rooker	Tigers	142.6
20.	Alex Verdugo	Blues	141.1
21.	Nico Hoerner	Blues	137.8
22.	Jonathan India	Bears	136.7
	Ozzie Albies	Senators	136.7
24.	Pete Alonso	Bums	136.3
25.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	135.2

WHO'S HOT – HITTING

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Sean Murphy	Tigers	52.4
2.	Lourdes Gurriel Jr.	Saints	50.5
3.	Luis Robert Jr.	Blues	49.6
4.	Anthony Santander	Skipjacks	49.5
5.	Christian Walker	Redbirds	47.1
6.	Salvador Perez	Senators	47.0
7.	Daulton Varsho	Blues	45.5
	Masataka Yoshida	Skipjacks	45.5
9.	Paul Goldschmidt	Cubs	43.3
10.	Marcell Ozuna	Tribe	43.0
11.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	40.6
12.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	38.9
13.	Bo Bichette	Bears	37.7
14.	Ezequiel Tovar	Monarchs	36.3
15.	Ketel Marte	Saints	35.0
	Lane Thomas	Cubs	35.0
17.	Javier Báez	Monarchs	34.8
18.	Mookie Betts	Bombers	34.6
19.	Yandy Díaz	Bums	34.5
20.	Luis García	Senators	34.1
21.	Jonathan India	Bears	33.8
22.	Eric Haase	Cubs	33.7
23.	Anthony Rendon	Redbirds	33.1
24.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	32.3
25.	Kris Bryant	Tigers	32.1



WHO'S NOT – HITTING

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Jose Miranda	Bums	-4.2
2.	Andrés Giménez	Bums	-2.6
3.	Edward Olivares	Tigers	-2.5
	Brandon Lowe	Wahoos	-2.5
5.	Rodolfo Castro	Skipjacks	-1.8
6.	Jazz Chisholm Jr.	Monarchs	-1.5
	Mitch Haniger	Bombers	-1.5
8.	Christian Vázquez	Tigers	-1.4
9.	Corey Julks	Bombers	-1.0
	Tyler O'Neill	Bums	-1.0
11.	Jesús Aguilar	Bombers	-0.3

II. THE TRIP

After much debate and consideration, we are happy to announce that the Hot Stove League Trip this season will be to Chicago and Wrigley Field the weekend of September 8-10 to catch the Cubs for two games against the Arizona Diamondbacks on Friday night, September 8 and Saturday afternoon, September 9. Flights and hotel details will be coming soon, but for now, please check your calendars and see how many of you can make it and then report back.

III. DRAFT DAY 2024

Plans are in the making for our Hot Stove League Draft in milestone Season No. 40 to take place in Scottsdale just ahead of Opening Day. We have already secured some outstanding accommodations for our group, and it promises to be an epic event. For now, please make sure that your calendars are generally blocked off for the entire week of **March 24 through March 31**, and as we get closer to the time, we will nail down specific dates.

Last Friday I had lunch with Underbelly and SloPay at *The Watering Hole* in Lincoln and they both confirmed that they are committed to this little junket in commemoration of our 40th campaign, but are insisting on similar commitments from each and every one of you. Please don't disappoint them.

IV. MAYBERRY, REVISITED

Lunch with Bob and Denny was fun for a whole lot of reasons, not the least of which was rehashing all of our respective favorite episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show*. Brother SloPay is encyclopedic when it comes to recounting specific episodes and dialogue, and it is quite clear that he is putting his free time to excellent use.





One of our mutual favorite recurring characters on *The Andy Griffith Show* is Ernest T. Bass, shown here. For those of you not in the know, Ernest T. is a hillbilly's hillbilly who was constantly causing problems for Sheriff Taylor and Deputy Fife, particularly when he was courting Charlene and disturbing her pa, Briscoe Darling, played by the inestimable Denver Pyle.

As I shared with Bob and Denny, I once had a jury trial in Counciltucky in which one of the prospective jurors was a woman named—hand to God—**Ernestine Bass**. I spotted this woman as trouble when the plaintiff's lawyer was asking questions of the panel during jury selection, and she had her arm raised on just about every question, so desperate was she to be heard on just about everything. When it was my turn to question the panel and I asked one of my preliminary questions her arm shot up like a bottle rocket and she began waving her hand around like a flag whipping in the wind. While I wanted to ignore her, it would have been too obvious and so I called on her to respond to my question.

If only her response had been tape-recorded. What she had to say was such a tangled mess of words in an endless run-on sentence, with the worst use of grammar and syntax imaginable, such that my eyes eventually glazed over. Not sure how to follow up with this, I turned to the man sitting next to Ernestine in the jury box, and said, "Sir, how about you, how do you feel about what Ms. Bass just said?" His face immediately went ghostly white and he in an obvious panic sputtered out some of his own equally indiscernible thoughts, because there was absolutely no way that anyone on that jury panel could have made any sense of what Ernestine had said. Cowardly if not mean-spirited on my part, I'll grant you that, but in my own moment of brain freeze I just did not know what else to do.



I was mentioning this episode to Linda in recent times and our firm internet sleuth took it upon herself to see if Ernestine was still around these here parts. Amazingly—but not if you understand Linda's persistence—she found this photo of Ernestine and an address listing for her in Counciltucky, where she is no doubt still hoping for the day when she gets another jury summons.

I have no doubt that Ernestine's father was an ardent fan of *The Andy Griffith Show*. She absolutely had to be named after the brainy and lovable Ernest T. Bass.

V. A FOOTBALL LIFE



Last weekend while I was on the elliptical and channel surfing for something to take my mind off the pain, I found a documentary or biopic or whatever the heck they call it about Julian Edelman, formerly of the New England Patriots and a favorite target of Tom Brady during several of the Patriots' Super Bowl campaigns. It is well worth watching, the dude was tough as nails notwithstanding his somewhat diminutive size.

Edelman was drafted by the Patriots in the second round of the NFL draft, and from day one he expected to be cut by Belichick before he would ever play a game. It seems that the Patriots already had a pretty decent slot receiver by the name of Wes Welker, and had no intention of ceding the spot on the team to Edelman.

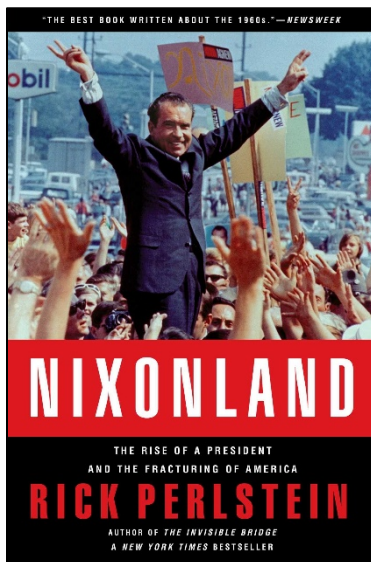
Anyway, when Edelman got his first chance to play in a preseason game and put on a bravura performance, Belichick turned to Welker on the sidelines and asked him if he felt like *Wally Pipp*. Welker responded with a blank look on his face, and Belichick then asked him if he knew who Wally Pipp was, and Welker said that he did not. Belichick then explained that there was this guy named Lou Gehrig who played in a game because the Yankees' regular first baseman, Wally Pipp, was ill that day, and that Gehrig went on to start something like 23,000,¹ and Welker then laughed a funny little laugh, still apparently not getting the joke.

Edelman is part of a very tight family, and in the documentary they talk about Julian's grandfather who was a European Jew and who died pretty young, and Julian's father was then raised by someone else as a Catholic. But when Julian found out about his Jewish heritage, he and his father started taking instruction from a rabbi, and took a trip together with him to the Holy Land.

Julian's kinda simple father was trying to explain in this documentary how Julian earned everything that he has gotten through hard work, using the time-honored analogy: "You can lead a donkey to water, but you can't turn him into a horse; Julian is our 'show pony.'" This sounded a lot like one of BT's notorious mixed metaphors.

It's worth watching.

Next edition: A book report on *Nixonland*.



That's it for now.

Skipper

¹ Belichick was just a little bit off. The actual number, of course, was 2,130 consecutive games, not 23,000.