

FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Newsletter of the

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

2023: Our 39th Season

Edition No. 13



May 23, 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
("Maggie/Tricko")
Bums

Chuck Sinclair
("Shamu")
Cubs

John Thielen
("Itchie")
Skipjacks

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Dave Ernst

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Assistant Editor
Linda "Chief" Koftan

WAHOOS AND SAINTS CONTINUE MONOPOLISTIC WAYS: RUMOR OF CONSPIRATORIAL SECRET MEETING LOOMS

Brethren,

For the 327th consecutive week, the **Saints** and the **Wahoos** find themselves in the first and second spots in the league standings. The **Wahoos** scored a gasp-inducing total of 651.2 points for the week, while the **Saints** were close behind with 574.2 points.

The **Wahoos** lead the Hot Stove League standings through seven weeks with 3826.9 points, with the **Saints** less than 3 points behind at 3824.1. In the ho-hum, who-cares department, the **Skipjacks** are a distant third with 3483.2 points.

So it's déjà vu all over again. Once more, the two league 1 percenters have unleashed their bottomless pits of time and money to monopolize the Hot Stove League the way that Masters & Johnson dominated the sexual revolution. From now on when I think of sinister, anti-competitive, monopolistic fiends, the names Krause & Bridges will jump to the front of the line ahead of the Carnegie Steel Company, Rockefeller and his Standard Oil and the American Tobacco Company. Maybe it's time to ask Congress to revisit our baseball antitrust exemption.

HSL STANDINGS THRU WEEK 8 ENDING MAY 21, 2023

1	Wahoos	3826.9	-
2	Saints	3824.1	2.8
3	Skipjacks	3483.2	343.7
4	Bombers	3425.6	401.3
5	Cubs	3421.4	405.5
6	Bums	3366.6	460.3
7	Redbirds	3308.3	518.6
8	Monarchs	3246.0	580.9

9	Tigers	3244.7	582.2
10	Blues	3158.7	668.2
11	Bears	3102.8	724.1
12	Senators	3037.8	789.1
13	Tribe	2804.1	1022.8

POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 8

1	Wahoos	651.2
2	Saints	579.2
3	Skipjacks	536.3
4	Bombers	511.4
5	Tigers	503.9
6	Monarchs	458.5
7	Cubs	432.2
8	Redbirds	426.9
9	Tribe	401.6
10	Bears	375.9
11	Senators	340.7
12	Bums	327.5
13	Blues	319.7

Not to sound like sour grapes or anything, but aren't we all glad that our proposal to change our league to a Head-to-Head format was rejected? But how many of you knew when you voted that there had been a secret cabal between the owners of the now top three teams in the standings at a secluded bar in Scottsdale, where this conspiratorial trio met and conferred and conspired to defeat the well-intentioned proposal to make this a more balanced and more competitive league? That's what I thought.

Keep that in mind when the next proposal is made in the fall.¹

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS AND LOSERS

Not that I personally give a Rat's Derriere anymore, but Monopolist 1 had the top pitcher for the week in Michael Wacha at 72.0 points, as well as the top hitter for the week, Aaron Judge, with 67.0 points. Monopolist 2 had the second highest scoring hitter of the week, Nolan Gorman with 54.2 points. Of course he did.

¹ Or, we could discuss it at our Winter Meeting. Right after PAwesome feeds us and hands out our new gear, that is. Right after pigs fly. Right after Itchie turns down his first drink.

TOP 25 PITCHERS

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Mitch Keller	Saints	252.0
2.	Gerrit Cole	Bombers	244.0
	Joe Ryan	Tribe	244.0
4.	Shane McClanahan	Blues	242.0
5.	Shohei Ohtani	Redbirds	240.0
6.	Justin Steele	Monarchs	235.0
7.	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	229.0
8.	Zac Gallen	Bears	228.0
9.	Nathan Eovaldi	Wahoos	213.0
	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	213.0
11.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	212.0
12.	Clayton Kershaw	Cubs	207.0
13.	George Kirby	Blues	205.0
14.	Eduardo Rodriguez	Senators	202.0
15.	Logan Webb	Tribe	196.0
16.	Chris Bassitt	Senators	195.0
17.	Cristian Javier	Tribe	190.0
	Merrill Kelly	Tigers	190.0
	Sonny Gray	Bombers	190.0
20.	Pablo López	Saints	187.0
21.	Shane Bieber	Skipjacks	183.0
22.	Marcus Stroman	Tigers	179.0
	Lucas Giolito	Senators	179.0
24.	Bryce Elder	Redbirds	178.0
25.	Drew Smyly	Bombers	175.0

WHO'S HOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Michael Wacha	Wahoos	72.0
2.	Lance Lynn	Bombers	57.0
3.	Merrill Kelly	Tigers	52.0
4.	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	49.0
5.	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	48.0
6.	Jack Flaherty	Saints	46.0
	Michael Kopech	Tigers	46.0
8.	George Kirby	Blues	45.0
	Shohei Ohtani	Redbirds	45.0
10.	Patrick Corbin	Monarchs	43.0
11.	Jared Shuster	Bombers	39.0

12.	Aaron Nola	Tigers	35.0
	Rich Hill	Cubs	35.0
	Charlie Morton	Wahoos	35.0
15.	Justin Steele	Monarchs	34.0
	Josiah Gray	Bums	34.0
	Chris Sale	Monarchs	34.0
18.	Braxton Garrett	Saints	32.0
	Kyle Bradish	Monarchs	32.0
	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	32.0
21.	Logan Gilbert	Bums	31.0
	Chris Bassitt	Senators	31.0
	Justin Verlander	Tigers	31.0
	Michael Lorenzen	Bums	31.0
25.	Martín Pérez	Tigers	30.0

WHO'S NOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Marco Gonzales	Redbirds	-22.0
2.	Kyle Freeland	Bombers	-18.0
3.	Jameson Taillon	Monarchs	-16.0
4.	Zac Gallen	Bears	-14.0
5.	Julio Urias	Saints	-12.0
6.	Eric Lauer	Blues	-11.0
7.	Seth Lugo	Wahoos	-10.0
8.	Graham Ashcraft	Bums	-9.0
9.	Luis Ortiz	Bears	-8.0
	J.P. France	Bums	-8.0
	Ranger Suárez	Cubs	-8.0
12.	Brad Keller	Blues	-5.0
13.	Grayson Rodriguez	Bears	-3.0
14.	Chase Silseth	Bears	-2.0
15.	Luis Castillo	Blues	-1.0

TOP 25 HITTERS

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	248.5
2.	Marcus Semien	Cubs	226.0
3.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	221.4
4.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	210.5
5.	Randy Arozarena	Saints	207.6
6.	Adolis García	Skipjacks	205.0

7.	Yandy Díaz	Bums	203.1
8.	Paul Goldschmidt	Cubs	197.6
9.	Pete Alonso	Bums	197.2
10.	Aaron Judge	Wahoos	195.5
11.	Cedric Mullins	Saints	192.1
12.	Nolan Gorman	Saints	190.9
13.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	190.8
14.	Anthony Rizzo	Bombers	190.2
15.	Bo Bichette	Bears	188.0
16.	Yordan Alvarez	Redbirds	187.6
17.	Mookie Betts	Bombers	183.3
18.	Josh Lowe	Saints	181.2
19.	Luis Robert Jr.	Blues	180.2
20.	Rafael Devers	Monarchs	179.7
21.	Max Muncy	Wahoos	177.8
22.	Wander Franco	Blues	176.4
23.	Mike Trout	Senators	175.7
24.	Sean Murphy	Tigers	175.2
25.	Juan Soto	Saints	172.2

WHO'S HOT – HITTING

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Aaron Judge	Wahoos	67.0
2.	Nolan Gorman	Saints	54.2
3.	Jeimer Candelario	Tigers	53.3
4.	Christopher Morel	Tribe	53.0
5.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	48.4
6.	Nolan Arenado	Bombers	42.9
7.	Corbin Carroll	Bears	42.0
8.	Tommy Edman	Redbirds	41.1
9.	Adolis García	Skipjacks	41.0
10.	Lane Thomas	Cubs	40.0
11.	Paul DeJong	Wahoos	38.5
12.	Cedric Mullins	Saints	38.0
13.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	37.7
14.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	36.0
15.	Josh Lowe	Saints	35.6
	Seiya Suzuki	Blues	35.6
17.	Pete Alonso	Bums	35.0
	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	35.0
19.	Brenton Doyle	Wahoos	34.7
20.	Marcus Semien	Cubs	34.5
21.	Corey Seager	Tribe	33.8

22.	Anthony Santander	Skipjacks	33.6
	Alex Bregman	Bums	33.6
24.	Jorge Soler	Bombers	32.5
	Adam Frazier	Senators	32.5

WHO'S NOT – HITTING

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Michael Harris II	Bombers	-7.30
2.	Daulton Varsho	Blues	-5.40
3.	Trent Grisham	Bombers	-3.00
4.	Mike Yastrzemski	Tigers	-2.00
5.	Javier Báez	Monarchs	-1.80
6.	Patrick Wisdom	Senators	-1.00
7.	Taylor Ward	Tribe	-0.50
	Jared Walsh	Blues	-0.50

But enough about baseball, I'm bored with this season already. How about we talk a little football, instead.

IN PRAISE OF JIM BROWN



You probably saw that NFL Hall of Famer Jim Brown passed away the other day at the age of 87. You all know he was a Hall-of-Fame running back for the Cleveland Browns. But did you know:



He led the Browns to the NFL Championship in 1964, and they haven't won a title since, one of the few NFL teams to have never played in the Super Bowl.



Brown retired after the 1965 season, arguably his best season yet, to embark upon an acting career. When he retired after nine seasons, he was the all-time NFL leader in rushing yards and touchdowns, among other marks.



As an actor, Brown was one of many stars in the *Dirty Dozen* and had more than fifty film credits to his name.

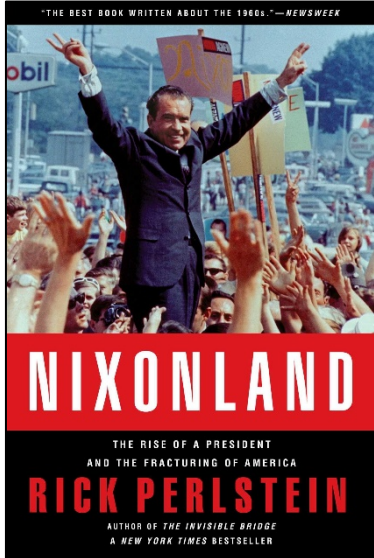


At Syracuse, Brown was a four-sport athlete, starring in football, basketball, track and field and lacrosse, making all-American in lacrosse his senior year.



Although he had a few dalliances with the law, Brown was an ardent advocate for Civil Rights, and broke a lot of tackles in this arena as well.

BOOK REPORT:
NIXONLAND
The Rise of a President
and the Fracturing of America.
by Rick Perlstein



Now that you have all reached the full flower of maturity,² you should really think about reading the book that I just finished: *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*. I am not even sure how I heard about this book, but luckily I did, because it is one of the most fascinating recapturings of the turbulent 1960s that has been written. With all of the divisiveness and unrest and protest movements and violence that roiled America during this remarkable half-decade, it is no small wonder that our country didn't devolve into civil war. Not an exaggeration, by the way.

While we innocent, pre-teen Midwesterners were thriving in our *Leave It To Beaver* youth, mostly oblivious to the insanity that was going on all around the country, there were some spectacular race riots going on all around the country, including the deadly and devastating Watts riots of August 11-16, 1965. Although LBJ declared the War on Poverty in his State of the Union address of January 8, 1964, for the millions of poor Blacks who were living in squalor in the slums of L.A. and Houston and Detroit and Philadelphia and Chicago and Kansas City and even Omaha, progress toward Civil Rights and toward a future with any hope at all was agonizingly slow. The nation's big cities were tinderboxes just waiting for the strike of a match, and there were plenty of matches to be had. Mayors and governors resorted to calling out the National Guard and other military units to try to restore the peace. For perspective, think about the amount of policing that was necessary to quell the non-peaceful protesting and rioting after George Floyd's death, and then consider this: a force of **9800 paratroopers** was called in to help keep the peace during the rioting in Detroit in the summer of 1968.

As if the race riots and the sometimes overzealous policing of the riots wasn't enough, consider some of the other mayhem that occurred in the last half of the decade of the '60s:



The continued escalation of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War by Tricky Dick, after he campaigned hard on how he would end the war and bring our boys home from 'Nam.



While Blacks were marching and demonstrating and demanding better jobs and better housing and better treatment, angry Southern Democrats were unhappy in the extreme about the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Many felt that their former good old boy leader of the Senate, now President Johnson, had betrayed their trust and enacted this landmark Civil Rights legislation against their interests. Many of the acts of violence and murder against peaceful protesters in the South are today understood to have been a "backlash" against the Civil Rights bills. Even though *Brown v. Board of Education* was handed down in 1955 and was the law of

² Well, most of you, that is. I can think of one or two of you who have not yet started down the slippery slope toward senility.

the land, the reddest of the rednecks in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Georgia weren't about to see their White children integrated with Black children, and were doing everything they could to stop it. They thought the infamous *Dred Scott* decision was better law than *Brown*.



The birth of "Black Power" and the rise of the Black Panthers were other prominent factors in the tumultuous '60s. Unconvinced that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s orthodoxy of peaceful protest was a winning strategy, the Black Panthers advocated exerting might and if necessary, violence to achieve their goals. One Black Panther, Bobby Seale, was indicted for conspiring with seven other people that he never even met, leading to his initial inclusion as a defendant in the Trial of the Chicago Eight—where the judge had him tied and gagged in the courtroom while in front of the jury. The judge eventually cut him out of that case and the proceedings continued as the Trial of the Chicago Seven, which included Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman.



The hippie generation was centrally in "full flower" in the late 1960s, with many of them demonstrating and marching for Civil Rights and against the Vietnam war. There were protests and sit-ins and building takeovers and unrelenting chaos on college campuses all across the country while Ronald Reagan, then the governor of California, quickly earned a reputation as a leader who was tough on crime and even tougher on criminals, refusing to flinch when a few long-haired, smelly "pinkos" got their skulls bashed in by an LAPD nightstick. When Reagan became the Law and Order Governor, Nixon became obsessed with worry that Reagan might supplant him as the Republican standard bearer in the 1960 election, but Ronnie's time had not yet come.



The radical far left group known as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was hatched and grew quickly and included Tom Hayden as one of its leading lights. When the SDS planned to demonstrate at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in October of 1968, (the first) Mayor Daly gave a carte blanche watch to his Chief of Police to use whatever amount of force was necessary to keep the students/hippies/Commies from his long-awaited DMC party. Somehow the convention survived the insanity and put forth the name of *Hubert Horatio Humphrey* on the presidential ballot, in lieu of Gene McCarthy ("Clean Gene"), George McGovern from South Dakota and Edwin Muskie from Maine. As history tells us, poor old Hubert was dragged down by his involvement in the Johnson administration as VP, and did not ever get the traction that he would have needed to claim first place.



As if the above and foregoing weren't enough to assure a divided country and a calculating, prevaricating and sinister president, then throw in a few more firestarters and accelerants:

- The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- The assassination of Bobby Kennedy in California
- The third-party presidential bid by George Wallace
- The Tate-LaBianca murders
- The rise of the Weathermen
- Woodstock

In light of this miasma of troubling circumstances embroiling our country, one can understand why it is that a two-time loser like Richard Milhous Nixon was able to step into the breach

and win the election in 1968; and one of the lessons that I learned from this book³ is how it was likewise possible for POTUS 46 to step into the breach in 2016 and win the election to a first (and hopefully *only*) term in the White House. As in the late '60s, there is just so much anger and division among the masses that an autocrat like The Donald was able to bluff, bluster and lie his way into office. *Nixonland* is a cautionary tale that unfortunately not enough people read or heeded its warning.

It is difficult to look back now and think about all the chaos and turmoil of the late '60s during my blissful ignorance of same. Even as I was lacing up my Chuck Taylor high tops and heading over to Lincoln Northeast for a Pershing Panthers basketball game or donning my rubber cleats for a Little Chiefs baseball game, over at a Lincoln Northeast field, America seemed to be on the verge of destruction.⁴ Our parents must have been terrified, for themselves and for us, their kids. And yet somehow, some way, our country survived, even if it meant Omaha's own Jerry Ford taking over the reins and pardoning Tricky Dick.

And because of that, I am optimistic that America will get through this current mess and divisiveness of our politicians and the divisions between Republicans and Democrats, and once again restore honor and dignity and peace and love in our hallowed land. Call me a dreamer, but we have to have dreams.⁵ You may now stop saluting the flag. As you were.

Skipper

³ Which was published six years before Trump was elected in 2016, by the way.

⁴ And as I write this, I can hear the haunting voice of Barry McGuire singing his epic ballad *Eve of Destruction* and seemingly portending the future.

⁵ Well, I *used* to have dreams. Dreams of winning another Hot Stove League title before we pull the curtain on this beloved league. Now, it's just one 180-day nightmare after another. Color me the color of sour grapes.