

FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Newsletter of the

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

2023: Our 39th Season

Edition No. 20



July 27, 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

SAINTS AND WAHOOS STILL 1-2; MONARCHS, TRIBE AND BUMS ON RISE; CUBS STUMBLE

Through 17 weeks the **Saints** continue to occupy the top position in the league standings with 8035.6, followed narrowly by the second-place **Wahoos** with 8022.7 points, a mere 12.9 points off the pace. However, for Week 17, the story was that of the **Monarchs** (594.8), the **Tribe** (549.9) and the **Bums** (528.8), all three of which have moved up in the standings in a declaration that they intend to be relevant in the second half of this year's campaign. But at the other extreme, the **Cubs** faltered with a league-worst 278.1 points, dropping the baby bears to 6th place overall.

Here are the Week 17 standings and point totals:

I. STANDINGS FOR WEEK 17 THROUGH JULY 23, 2023

	Team	Points	Pts Back
1	Saints	8035.6	-
2	Wahoos	8022.7	12.9
3	Bums	7666.9	368.7
4	Skipjacks	7429.4	606.2
5	Monarchs	7276.9	758.7
6	Cubs	7260.0	775.6
7	Bombers	7096.3	939.3
8	Bears	7059.5	976.1
9	Blues	6815.1	1220.5
10	Tigers	6787.2	1248.4
11	Tribe	6702.0	1333.6
12	Senators	6635.1	1400.5
13	Redbirds	6333.0	1702.6



POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 17

	Team	Pts
1	Monarchs	594.8
2	Tribe	549.9
3	Bums	528.8
4	Bears	494.5
5	Saints	478.7
6	Skipjacks	456.2
7	Wahoos	449.9
8	Redbirds	427.7
9	Bombers	422.8
10	Blues	405.1
11	Senators	388.0
12	Tigers	371.0
13	Cubs	278.1

II. INDIVIDUAL TOTALS

As usual, provided hereinbelow are the individual point totals, with Gerrit Cole of the **Bombers** leading all pitchers with 473.0 points, followed by Spencer Strider of the **Tigers** with 459.0 points; and with Shohei Ohtani of the **Skipjacks** atop the hitting leaderboard with 523.8 points, having surpassed Ronald Acuña Jr. of the **Cubs** who now has 512.2 points. With Ohtani also on the pitching leaderboard at No. 17 with 379.0 points, we are seeing a season for the ages from the greatest player since the days of the Bambino.

TOP 25 PITCHERS

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Gerrit Cole	Bombers	473.0
2.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	459.0
3.	Zac Gallen	Bears	443.0
4.	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	432.0
5.	Nathan Eovaldi	Wahoos	429.0
6.	Logan Webb	Tribe	414.0
7.	Jesús Luzardo	Saints	408.0
	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	408.0
9.	Corbin Burnes	Senators	401.0
10.	Shane Bieber	Blues	399.0
11.	Joe Ryan	Tribe	398.0
12.	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	394.0
13.	Marcus Stroman	Tigers	392.0
14.	Aaron Nola	Tigers	386.0
15.	George Kirby	Blues	384.0
16.	Mitch Keller	Saints	381.0



17.	Shohei Ohtani	Redbirds	379.0
18.	Luis Castillo	Blues	374.0
19.	Zack Wheeler	Cubs	371.0
20.	Chris Bassitt	Senators	369.0
21.	Clayton Kershaw	Cubs	365.0
	Justin Steele	Monarchs	365.0
23.	Pablo López	Saints	363.0
24.	Logan Gilbert	Bums	361.0
25.	Blake Snell	Skipjacks	358.0

WHO'S HOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Aaron Nola	Tigers	55.0
2.	Brandon Williamson	Blues	47.0
3.	Corbin Burnes	Senators	44.0
	Bailey Ober	Skipjacks	44.0
5.	Luis Medina	Bears	43.0
	Joe Musgrove	Saints	43.0
7.	Nick Pivetta	Bears	41.0
8.	MacKenzie Gore	Skipjacks	40.0
	George Kirby	Blues	40.0
	Andrew Abbott	Tribe	40.0
11.	Tanner Bibee	Bums	39.0
	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	39.0
13.	Justin Verlander	Tigers	38.0
14.	Jesús Luzardo	Saints	36.0
15.	Patrick Sandoval	Monarchs	35.0
16.	Eduardo Rodriguez	Senators	33.0
	Luis Severino	Cubs	33.0
	Michael Lorenzen	Bums	33.0
19.	Yu Darvish	Wahoos	31.0
	Ryne Nelson	Bears	31.0
	Chris Bassitt	Senators	31.0
22.	Justin Steele	Monarchs	30.0
	J.P. France	Bums	30.0
	Jameson Taillon	Monarchs	30.0
25.	Josiah Gray	Bums	29.0

WHO'S NOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Mitch Keller	Saints	-13.0
2.	Alex Cobb	Cubs	-12.0
3.	Julio Urías	Saints	-11.0



4.	Carlos Carrasco	Blues	-10.0
	Tarik Skubal	Saints	-10.0
6.	Marcus Stroman	Tigers	-7.0
	Braxton Garrett	Saints	-7.0
	Carlos Rodón	Skipjacks	-7.0
	Emmet Sheehan	Bears	-7.0
10.	Alex Wood	Cubs	-6.0
	Brayan Bello	Wahoos	-6.0
12.	Tyler Wells	Skipjacks	-3.0
	Freddy Peralta	Cubs	-3.0
	JP Sears	Bums	-3.0
15.	Johan Oviedo	Blues	-2.0
	Tommy Henry	Bombers	-2.0
	Bryan Woo	Bums	-2.0
	Lance Lynn	Bombers	-2.0
19.	Reese Olson	Cubs	-1.0
	Anthony DeSclafani	Skipjacks	-1.0
	Dean Kremer	Cubs	-1.0

TOP 25 HITTERS

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	523.8
2.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	512.2
3.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	505.3
4.	Mookie Betts	Bombers	458.9
5.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	450.9
6.	Juan Soto	Saints	413.7
7.	Corbin Carroll	Bears	404.3
8.	Ketel Marte	Saints	397.9
9.	Adolis García	Skipjacks	396.6
10.	Marcus Semien	Cubs	396.4
11.	Kyle Tucker	Monarchs	389.6
12.	Christian Yelich	Tigers	383.0
13.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	380.9
14.	Luis Robert Jr.	Blues	378.4
15.	José Ramírez	Tribe	375.2
16.	Austin Riley	Saints	375.1
17.	Nolan Arenado	Bombers	373.1
18.	Rafael Devers	Monarchs	367.9
19.	Paul Goldschmidt	Cubs	365.9
20.	Nathaniel Lowe	Bums	364.5
21.	Lane Thomas	Cubs	363.9
	Randy Arozarena	Saints	363.9
23.	Luis Arraez	Bums	360.6



24.	Justin Turner	Tigers	359.1
25.	Christian Walker	Redbirds	355.7

WHO'S HOT – HITTING

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	70.1
2.	Austin Riley	Saints	65.3
3.	Wilmer Flores	Redbirds	48.9
4.	Ketel Marte	Saints	47.3
	Alex Kirilloff	Saints	47.3
6.	Cody Bellinger	Tribe	45.1
7.	Juan Soto	Saints	44.1
8.	Corbin Carroll	Bears	43.6
9.	Edouard Julien	Bums	42.9
10.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	42.6
11.	Nolan Arenado	Bombers	41.6
12.	Matt McLain	Tribe	40.3
	Triston Casas	Bears	40.3
14.	Kyle Tucker	Monarchs	39.5
15.	Max Muncy	Wahoos	39.1
16.	Christian Walker	Redbirds	38.8
17.	Will Smith	Wahoos	36.7
18.	Gunnar Henderson	Blues	35.0
19.	Eugenio Suárez	Senators	34.6
20.	Taylor Ward	Tribe	33.5
	Josh Naylor	Monarchs	33.5
22.	Nico Hoerner	Blues	33.3
23.	Steven Kwan	Bums	33.0
24.	Max Kepler	Cubs	32.6
25.	Nathaniel Lowe	Bums	32.5

WHO'S NOT – HITTING

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Lourdes Gurriel Jr.	Saints	-7.0
2.	Patrick Bailey	Redbirds	-3.7
3.	Tyler Soderstrom	Blues	-2.4
4.	Brent Rooker	Senators	-1.5
5.	Bobby Witt Jr.	Bums	-1.0
	Alex Verdugo	Blues	-1.0
	Mike Yastrzemski	Tigers	-1.0



III. IN PRAISE OF: EAGLE'S NEST



This past Monday through Wednesday, I had the great good fortune of spending time with B.T. up at Eagle's Nest in Evergreen, as Scott unveiled with great pride and glee all of the renovation and refurbishing work that has taken place at his personal Valhalla over the course of the last four years. See pictures below:





B.T.: Is this Heaven?

Working under a cloak of secrecy and systematic avoidance of all jurisdictional authorities to circumvent red tape and hostile permit issuers and building inspection types, B.T. installed a hidden ATM in the erstwhile outdoor shower house in order to dispense cash to his “Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil” construction crew, whose identities we will protect by simply referring to them as “Frick and Frack.” Anyway, just four years after undertaking this project, Frick and Frack have finally turned the almost-finished product back over to B.T. for his use and enjoyment, and the place looks, smells and feels amazing. The impressive foundation is sturdy enough to support a cabana of Shamu look-alikes in their girthy primes, and on its best day might even stand up to Itchie’s liquor cabinet. The entire roof has been replaced, all of the windows replaced, all of the siding replaced, and the entire interior has been gutted and rebuilt—rendering it vermin and varmint free—by team Frick and Frack, who were able to put several children through four years of an Ivy League education by virtue of this marvelous joint venture.

Anyway, if there is anything better than sitting out on a deck chair at 6 a.m. on a crisp July morning and breathing in two lobes of pine-scented mountain air while taking in the majesty of Mount Evans, somebody’s going to have to prove it to me. It was absolutely fantastic to spend a few (although too-short) days hanging out with B.T. at Eagle’s Nest and solving all of the world’s problems (i.e., Homelessness, Drug Addiction; the threat of Artificial Intelligence; and others) while sipping on morning coffee or an evening nightcap at the end of the day. We got it all figured out. Just ask us.



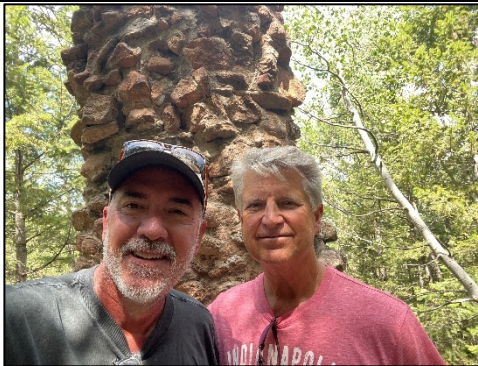
A few of the highlights of the trip:



Dinner at the Lariat Lodge in Evergreen.



Hiking up to the abandoned Boy Scout camp at one end of B.T.’s property and checking up on the new structure being erected on a neighboring property by area newcomer Louisiana Brad for his planned winter campout.



Breakfast at the Park Ridge Café.



Driving up to Windsor¹ (near Ft. Collins) for a baseball contest at SmarterStadium at Future Legends Complex (Wow. That's a mouthful!) between the NoCo Owlz² and the Idaho Falls Chukars in a Pioneer League game that resulted in a blowout by the home team by the score of 24-4.

NoCo Owlz throttle Idaho Falls, 24-4, to earn biggest win since franchise move



Disorienting the opposing team batters on wild and wacky "Kazoo" Night at the ballpark.

¹ Colorado, not Itchie's favorite town in Canada and home to the Windsor Ballet.

² Formerly the Orem (Utah) Owlz.



Rehashing the epic Buffalo-to-Cleveland van-passing-on-the-shoulder escapade from The Trip of 1992, and reaching a clear consensus in the end.



Reliving the Krause "Runza Drive Inn Salvation Miracle" through the eyes of B.T., in the aftermath of the recent razing of the flagship store at 56th and Holdrege Streets in Lincoln.³ I was especially gladdened to hear that B.T. was able to take most of his family, children and grandchildren, over to experience a tour of the Grand Old Dame (including the dungeon in the basement where filling⁴ and Runzas, and sometimes wine, were made) for one last look at this historic structure where Scott and Kathi got their historic start.

IV. IN PRAISE OF MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK #100

When I mentioned to B.T. that the minor league ballpark in Windsor was my 99th minor league ballpark attended, he expressed disappointment that he wasn't along for the ride with me to see a game at a milestone 100th minor league ballpark, and he implored me to search my heart and mind to see if I might possibly have missed a ballpark that I have been to but perhaps forgot about. He asked me if I ever saw a game at Sherman Field in Lincoln, which at one time was the home baseball field for the Lincoln Chiefs. I responded that I have in fact seen baseball games played at Sherman Field, and that I even played in some baseball games at Sherman Field when I was on the varsity baseball team at Lincoln Northeast back in 1975. "There we go!" B.T. announced instantly and excitedly, "you've seen baseball games in 100 minor league ballparks, and I was there with you for #100, so this trip now has even more special meaning for both of us!"

So there we go. The Music Man has spoken and let it now be written: I have seen baseball games in 100 minor league ballparks, most recently with B.T. at #100. Bully!

³ And being reminded once again, for about the 187th time, that not only is B.T. the brain trust behind the stupendously successful and profitable "The temperature is your price" Runza campaign, but that he also went on to split the atom and develop the unparalleled epicurean delight known as the *Swiss cheese mushroom burger*, which while initially ridiculed and rebuked, eventually went on to earn B.T. his first "Golden Sammy" award and the everlasting admiration and respect of millions around the globe.

⁴ Including by yours truly, slavishly, for the princely hourly rate of a buck thirty-five.

V. THE TRIP



The list of Trip attendees for the 2023 HSL junket to Wrigley Field, September 8-10, now includes:

Solid Yeses: Shamu
 Stretch
 Skipper
 Itchie
 Mouse

Maybes: B.T.
 Magpie

Big Guy and Screech are officially out, but we continue to await word from the rest of youse boys, so how about it? PAwesome, Underbelly, SloPay, Tirebiter? Are you going to soar with the eagles or play the "I can't go, Bluto. I'm . . . afraid" card.

VI. THE 2024 DRAFT AND TRIP

Miracle of miracles, the 2024 Major League baseball schedule has already come out, and our hopes and dreams have been answered! That is, the Arizona Diamondbacks will open their 2024 season AT HOME at THE BOB on Thursday, March 28, 2024. This means that we can catch a Spring Training game on Monday or Tuesday of that week, have our Draft on Wednesday, and then see the Opening Day game on Thursday before dispersing on Friday, which should make this an easily-doable trip for everyone, and will allow us to add The Bob to our official list of HSL venues.



We have already secured accommodations for our Baker's Dozen for the aforementioned time period, and as we get further along, we'll begin looking at the cost of flights and game tickets. But for now, please be sure to **block off on your calendars Monday, March 25, through Friday, March 29**, and for those who want to come earlier or stay later, govern yourselves accordingly.

It's gonna be great, fellas!

VII. IN PRAISE OF MIXED METAPHORS



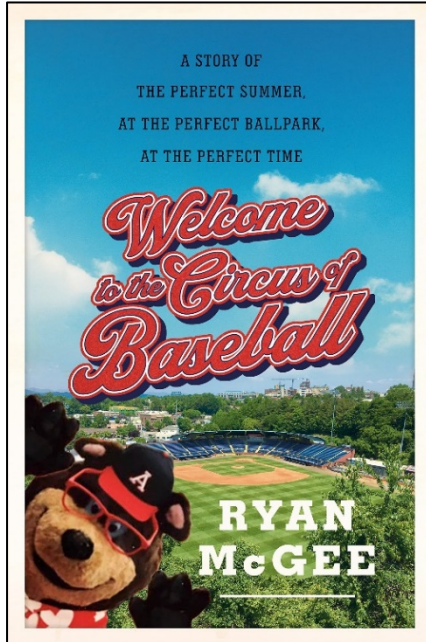
During our stay at Eagle's Nest, while B.T. and I were comparing our respective mates' consumer spending habits, B.T. adroitly sized up the situation and said, **"They're two peas cut from the same cloth,"**⁵ which immediately qualified as one of my favorite of B.T.'s legion of mixed metaphors. Perhaps B.T.'s best work since a famously stated comment after a difficult hole on the links that he was **"coming apart at the wheels."** We know what you meant, B.T.

⁵ Makes you wonder where they are hiding all those cloth peas.

VIII. BOOK REPORT
WELCOME TO THE CIRCUS OF BASEBALL:
A Story of the Perfect Summer, at the Perfect
Ballpark, at the Perfect Time

By Ryan McGee

Published by Doubleday, © 2023



I just finished reading the delightful book that was gifted to me by Brother Stretch entitled *Welcome to the Circus of Baseball: A Story of the Perfect Summer, at the Perfect Ballpark, at the Perfect Time*, written by ESPN senior writer Ryan McGee, of *Marty & McGee* of ESPN radio and SEC Edward renown. The book, a light and breezy read, chronicles McGee's one-season internship at historic McCormick Field in Asheville, North Carolina, home of the *Asheville Tourists* during the summer of 1994 after he graduated from the University of Tennessee. As one of three interns working for the *Tourists* during the 1994 season, McGee relates with great fondness his time spent learning the business of minor league baseball from the ground up, being involved in every aspect of the operation from field maintenance to ticket sales to concessions to auditioning prospective performers of the nightly National Anthem for home games. Like the ol' Skipper, McGee is an aficionado of minor league baseball, reportedly having visited 130 minor league ballparks over the years.

So entertained and inspired by this book were we, Stretch and I have lined up a junket to Asheville to visit McCormick Field the weekend of August 25-27, and if any of the rest of you would like to throw in with us on this little quest, let me know and I will provide you with our travel details. Otherwise, we will report back with our own review of McCormick Field and the city of Asheville. Can't wait to see it.

That's it for this issue, fellas.

Next edition: A Tale from the Well: "And Then an Anvil Fell on His Head"; and a book report on *The Making of the President 1972*.

Have a great weekend, amigos!

Skipper