

FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Newsletter of the

NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

2023: Our 39th Season

Edition No. 22



August 7, 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

Gentlemen:

First and foremost, Happy 64th Birthday to Stretch McBlunder, who reached that milestone yesterday. Still just a kid!



Secondly, the **Evil Empire** has resumed the spot atop the standings after a mediocre week of competition by the **Saints**. Here are the standings through 19 weeks, as well as the point totals for Week 19:

I.

	Team	Points	Pts Back
1	Wahoos	8925.4	-
2	Saints	8902.2	23.2
3	Bums	8684.8	240.6
4	Skipjacks	8252.1	673.3
5	Cubs	8170.7	754.7
6	Monarchs	8128.0	797.4
7	Bears	7976.8	948.6
8	Bombers	7948.8	976.6
9	Blues	7791.1	1134.3

10	Tribe	7708.8	1216.6
11	Senators	7609.0	1316.4
12	Tigers	7521.9	1403.5
13	Redbirds	7123.7	1801.7

	Team	Pts
1	Blues	546.6
2	Bombers	519.8
3	Skipjacks	503.4
4	Bears	490.9
5	Bums	489.1
6	Cubs	469.3
7	Monarchs	465.6
8	Wahoos	463.8
9	Tribe	439.2
10	Saints	432.1
11	Senators	428.2
12	Tigers	398.5
13	Redbirds	373.0

And here are the individual point totals for last week:

II.

TOP 25 PITCHERS

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Gerrit Cole	Bombers	535.0
2.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	516.0
3.	Zac Gallen	Bears	492.0
4.	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	463.0
5.	Logan Webb	Tribe	461.0
6.	Corbin Burnes	Senators	459.0
7.	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	442.0
8.	George Kirby	Blues	439.0
9.	Shohei Ohtani	Redbirds	437.0
	Luis Castillo	Blues	437.0
11.	Justin Steele	Monarchs	434.0
12.	Nathan Eovaldi	Wahoos	429.0
13.	Zack Wheeler	Cubs	428.0
14.	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	422.0
15.	Pablo López	Saints	418.0
	Blake Snell	Skipjacks	418.0

17.	Jesús Luzardo	Saints	415.0
18.	Chris Bassitt	Senators	414.0
19.	Shane McClanahan	Blues	406.0
20.	José Berríos	Senators	402.0
21.	Logan Gilbert	Bums	401.0
22.	Joe Ryan	Tribe	387.0
23.	Aaron Nola	Tigers	383.0
24.	Mitch Keller	Saints	381.0
25.	Kyle Gibson	Monarchs	373.0

WHO'S HOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Johan Oviedo	Blues	64.0
2.	Andrew Heaney	Bears	63.0
3.	Kyle Gibson	Monarchs	60.0
4.	Lance Lynn	Bombers	58.0
5.	Chase Silseth	Bears	53.0
6.	George Kirby	Blues	50.0
7.	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	46.0
8.	Zac Gallen	Bears	43.0
	Kyle Bradish	Monarchs	43.0
10.	Austin Gomber	Cubs	42.0
11.	Dane Dunning	Skipjacks	41.0
	J.P. France	Bums	41.0
13.	Jesse Scholtens	Bears	40.0
	Taijuan Walker	Bums	40.0
15.	Corbin Burnes	Senators	39.0
	Sandy Alcantara	Bums	39.0
17.	Brady Singer	Saints	38.0
18.	Matt Brash	Redbirds	37.5
19.	Max Fried	Redbirds	36.0
20.	Tyler Glasnow	Bears	35.0
21.	Chris Bassitt	Senators	34.0
	Kenta Maeda	Senators	34.0
23.	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	33.0
	Sonny Gray	Monarchs	33.0
	Justin Steele	Monarchs	33.0

WHO'S NOT – PITCHING

	Pitchers	Roster	Pts
1.	Ben Lively	Senators	-29.0
2.	Dylan Cease	Monarchs	-20.0
3.	Lucas Giolito	Senators	-18.0

4.	Marcus Stroman	Tigers	-11.0
5.	Joe Ryan	Tribe	-10.0
	Mitch Keller	Saints	-10.0
7.	Kyle Hendricks	Monarchs	-9.0
8.	Bryce Elder	Redbirds	-8.0
9.	Reid Detmers	Bears	-7.0
	Andrew Abbott	Tribe	-7.0
11.	Lyon Richardson	Skipjacks	-6.0
	Rich Hill	Cubs	-6.0
13.	Josiah Gray	Redbirds	-5.0
14.	José Urquidy	Redbirds	-3.0
15.	Shane McClanahan	Blues	-2.0
	Luis Medina	Bears	-2.0
	Hyun Jin Ryu	Senators	-2.0
	James Paxton	Monarchs	-2.0
19.	Mike Clevinger	Tigers	-1.0
	Carlos Rodón	Skipjacks	-1.0

TOP 25 HITTERS

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	594.2
2.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	592.8
3.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	580.1
4.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	532.4
5.	Mookie Betts	Bombers	519.3
6.	Juan Soto	Saints	479.7
7.	Marcus Semien	Cubs	469.1
8.	Adolis García	Skipjacks	459.1
9.	Kyle Tucker	Monarchs	441.1
10.	Corbin Carroll	Bears	440.8
11.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	431.0
12.	Christian Yelich	Tigers	428.5
13.	José Ramírez	Tribe	427.9
14.	Austin Riley	Saints	424.7
15.	Ketel Marte	Saints	422.5
16.	Francisco Lindor	Monarchs	421.7
17.	Luis Robert Jr.	Blues	418.5
18.	Nathaniel Lowe	Bums	414.9
19.	Lane Thomas	Cubs	408.6
20.	Bobby Witt Jr.	Bums	406.5
21.	Paul Goldschmidt	Cubs	401.6
22.	Rafael Devers	Monarchs	400.5
23.	Christian Walker	Redbirds	398.7
24.	Nolan Arenado	Bombers	397.9

25.	Josh Jung	Bears	397.8
-----	-----------	-------	-------

WHO'S HOT – HITTERS

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	53.8
2.	Dansby Swanson	Tigers	50.1
3.	Cody Bellinger	Tribe	49.3
4.	Adolis García	Skipjacks	49.0
5.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	47.4
6.	Gleyber Torres	Tigers	47.3
7.	Marcus Semien	Cubs	46.7
8.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	46.0
9.	Jeimer Candelario	Tigers	45.0
10.	Ryan Mountcastle	Skipjacks	44.9
11.	Mookie Betts	Bombers	44.8
12.	Juan Soto	Saints	44.0
13.	Lane Thomas	Cubs	43.0
14.	Ryan McMahon	Wahoos	42.0
	Lourdes Gurriel Jr.	Saints	42.0
16.	Alec Bohm	Senators	39.9
17.	Brandon Belt	Cubs	39.7
18.	Ian Happ	Redbirds	38.5
19.	Gunnar Henderson	Blues	37.8
20.	Mike Tauchman	Tribe	37.1
21.	Bobby Witt Jr.	Bums	36.6
22.	Wander Franco	Blues	36.0
23.	Jake Cronenworth	Senators	35.3
24.	Ha-Seong Kim	Wahoos	35.1
25.	Julio Rodríguez	Bears	35.0

WHO'S NOT – HITTERS

	Batters	Roster	Pts
1.	JJ Bleday	Bums	-6.4
2.	Starling Marte	Cubs	-4.0
3.	Ke'Bryan Hayes	Senators	-3.6
	Luis García	Senators	-3.6
5.	Christian Vázquez	Tigers	-2.0
6.	Jack Suwinski	Cubs	-1.4
7.	Mauricio Dubón	Tigers	-0.6
8.	Brian Anderson	Blues	-0.4

IN PRAISE OF: GENEVA, ILLINOIS AND NORTHWESTERN MEDICINE FIELD

Last Friday, HQ and I took a road trip toward Chicago and ended up catching a baseball game between the Kane County Cougars and the Cleburne Railroaders at Northwestern Medicine Field in Geneva, Illinois. See picture below of this little gem of a field.



The Kane County Cougars are one of those former minor league teams¹ that used to be affiliated with a major league team but is now an independent, playing in the same league

¹ As a member of the Midwest League beginning in 1991 when they moved from Wausau (the Timbers), the Cougars were previously affiliated with the Baltimore Orioles, then the Florida Marlins, then the

(American Association of Professional Baseball) as the Kansas City Monarchs, the Sioux City Explorers, the Fargo RedHawks, the Sioux Falls Canaries, and the Lincoln Saltdogs, among others. Pretty high quality baseball, but still a long, long way off from the major leagues.

One of the names that I recognized from the field that night were Cougars' second baseman Pete Kozma, who previously has played for the St. Louis Cardinals, New York Yankees, the Texas Rangers, the Detroit Tigers, and most recently the Oakland Athletics. During his 2021 season with the Athletics, he was 1-for-12 at the plate, with one walk, for a batting average of .091 and an on base percentage of .167. His lifetime major league average is .213, which explains why he is no longer in the majors. The other name I recognized was the Cleburne Railroaders' left fielder, Blaze Brothers, who recently played in the College World Series for the Oral Roberts Golden Eagles,² and who is just now starting the long, arduous journey from college baseball to the major leagues. Actually, his baseball journey has already been extensive, as he played high school baseball in Arkansas for the Har-Ber Wildcats, leading them to the Arkansas State Baseball Championship; and then played his freshman and sophomore seasons at Cowley County Community College; another sophomore year in 2021 at Northeastern State; his junior year at Northeastern State; and his senior year at Oral Roberts University.

Anyway, the City of Geneva does a great job of promoting their team and the stands looked like they were 75-80% full³, with a lot more fans there than we ever see at a Storm Chasers' AAA game in LaVista. For the Friday night game, the Cougars brought in a dude named Christian Stoinev, he of *America's Got Talent* fame, to show the fans how he could hold himself up with only one arm, and then perform tricks with his beloved canine companion. Pretty impressive.



The weather was great, the beer was cold and ubiquitous, the Polish sausages unparalleled, and the company (HQ) excellent.

Oakland Athletics, then the Kansas City Royals, then the Chicago Cubs and then the Arizona Diamondbacks. Some of the more prominent major leaguers who have played in Geneva are Miguel Cabrera, Josh Beckett and Dontrelle Willis.

² Brothers blasted a three-run homer against TCU in the ninth inning of the CWS game on 6/16/23, which proved to be the winning blow.

³ There were 7,137 fans in attendance, according to the internet.

The plan for the weekend was to catch a Gary SouthShore RailCats game on Saturday afternoon in Gary, Indiana, just about 40 minutes away from downtown Chicago, but Mother Nature foiled our plans with a steady, all-day rain. So we ate Giordano's pizza and drank beer instead. When life throws you a curve ball, sit on it and swing for the fences, you know?



And that's it for this short issue. Looking forward to seeing many of you on Saturday at Joe and Abbey's nuptials.

Skipper