

# FROM THE BULLPEN

Official Newsletter of the

## NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE

2023: Our 39th Season

Edition No. 25



August 31, 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

### EVIL EMPIRE SUPPRESSES INSURRECTION, WAHOOS RESUME CONTROL

The story of Week 22 of the Hot Stove League season is that the autocratic leader of the **Wahoos**, PAwesome O'Putin, was able to swiftly quell the recent insurrection by two ambitious but foolhardy former associates of the Vagner group, B.T. "I'm No Saint" Krause, and Magpie "I Know Nothing" Pirnie.

While rumors persist that dental records are currently being examined to determine whether Messrs. Krause and Pirnie were aboard the fateful Russian aircraft which crashed and took the life of the former head of the Vagner group, when asked for comment a spokesperson for Bridges Trust from their Red Square satellite office said simply, "Nyet." So do with that what you will.

Without further ado, here are the standings, the point totals for Week 22, and the individual point totals for said week:

### STANDINGS FOR WEEK 22

	Team	Points	Pts Back
1	Wahoos	10282.7	-
2	Saints	10231.2	51.5
3	Bums	10202.9	79.8
4	Skipjacks	9540.7	742.0
5	Monarchs	9470.0	812.7
6	Cubs	9427.7	855.0
7	Bears	9357.9	924.8
8	Blues	9243.6	1039.1
9	Bombers	9147.7	1135.0
10	Tribe	9100.2	1182.5
11	Senators	9001.6	1281.1
12	Tigers	8806.6	1476.1
13	Redbirds	8399.0	1883.7



## POINT TOTALS FOR WEEK 22

	<b>Team</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1	Tigers	648.7
2	Blues	599.5
3	Wahoos	553.1
4	Skipjacks	529.9
5	Bears	513.4
6	Tribe	492.7
7	Cubs	426.5
8	Bombers	399.9
9	Redbirds	394.6
10	Monarchs	372.8
11	Bums	363.4
12	Saints	352.4
13	Senators	334.6

## TOP 25 PITCHERS

	<b>Pitchers</b>	<b>Roster</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	617.0
2.	Gerrit Cole	Bombers	596.0
3.	Zac Gallen	Bears	587.0
4.	Luis Castillo	Blues	558.0
5.	Zack Wheeler	Cubs	523.0
6.	Pablo López	Saints	518.0
7.	Kevin Gausman	Bombers	514.0
8.	Logan Webb	Tribe	512.0
9.	Logan Gilbert	Bums	506.0
10.	Corbin Burnes	Senators	499.0
11.	George Kirby	Blues	497.0
12.	Justin Steele	Monarchs	492.0
13.	Blake Snell	Skipjacks	488.0
14.	Zach Eflin	Redbirds	487.0
15.	Framber Valdez	Wahoos	485.0
16.	Aaron Nola	Tigers	480.0
17.	Mitch Keller	Saints	477.0
18.	Max Scherzer	Senators	470.0
19.	Merrill Kelly	Tigers	466.0
20.	Chris Bassitt	Senators	457.0
21.	Sonny Gray	Monarchs	454.0
22.	Freddy Peralta	Cubs	452.0
23.	Kodai Senga	Redbirds	443.0
24.	Kyle Bradish	Monarchs	440.0
25.	Jordan Montgomery	Bums	436.0



### WHO'S HOT – PITCHING

	<b>Pitchers</b>	<b>Roster</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1.	Luis Castillo	Blues	74.0
2.	Aaron Nola	Tigers	68.0
3.	Justin Verlander	Tigers	60.0
4.	Graham Ashcraft	Tribe	51.0
5.	Javier Assad	Skipjacks	45.0
6.	Charlie Morton	Wahoos	42.0
	Jordan Montgomery	Bums	42.0
8.	Gerrit Cole	Bombers	41.0
9.	Cole Ragans	Blues	40.0
10.	Zack Wheeler	Cubs	39.0
	Merrill Kelly	Tigers	39.0
12.	Mike Clevinger	Tigers	38.0
	Mitch Keller	Saints	38.0
14.	Spencer Strider	Tigers	37.0
15.	Logan Gilbert	Bums	36.0
16.	Jesús Luzardo	Saints	35.0
17.	Brandon Woodruff	Tribe	34.0
18.	Kyle Gibson	Monarchs	32.0
	Slade Cecconi	Skipjacks	32.0
	Zac Gallen	Bears	32.0
	Luis Severino	Cubs	32.0
	Tyler Glasnow	Bears	32.0
23.	Dean Kremer	Cubs	31.0
	Seth Lugo	Wahoos	31.0
	Carlos Rodón	Skipjacks	31.0

### WHO'S NOT – PITCHING

	<b>Pitchers</b>	<b>Roster</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1.	J.P. France	Bums	-25.0
2.	Dylan Cease	Monarchs	-14.0
3.	Carlos Carrasco	Bombers	-13.0
4.	Jordan Lyles	Bombers	-12.0
5.	James Paxton	Monarchs	-9.0
6.	Drew Smyly	Tribe	-7.0
	Hunter Greene	Bears	-7.0
8.	Xzavion Curry	Bombers	-6.0
	Gavin Williams	Senators	-6.0
10.	Logan Allen	Tribe	-5.0
	Jon Gray	Wahoos	-5.0
	Adam Wainwright	Bombers	-5.0
13.	Yu Darvish	Wahoos	-4.0



	Eduardo Rodriguez	Senators	-4.0
15.	Dane Dunning	Skipjacks	-3.0
	Drew Rom	Redbirds	-3.0
	Adrian Houser	Skipjacks	-3.0
	José Quintana	Bombers	-3.0
19.	Logan Webb	Tribe	-2.0
	José Urquidy	Redbirds	-2.0
	Brady Singer	Saints	-2.0
22.	Matt Brash	Redbirds	-1.5
23.	Reid Detmers	Bears	-1.0

### **TOP 25 HITTERS**

	<b>Batters</b>	<b>Roster</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1.	Shohei Ohtani	Skipjacks	676.8
2.	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Cubs	669.3
3.	Mookie Betts	Bombers	654.0
4.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	649.6
5.	Matt Olson	Wahoos	629.7
6.	Marcus Semien	Cubs	535.8
7.	Kyle Tucker	Monarchs	533.6
8.	Corbin Carroll	Bears	513.3
9.	Bobby Witt Jr.	Bums	508.7
10.	Juan Soto	Saints	506.9
11.	Francisco Lindor	Monarchs	503.8
12.	Austin Riley	Saints	503.4
13.	Julio Rodríguez	Bears	496.3
14.	Alex Bregman	Bums	493.1
15.	Adolis García	Skipjacks	489.1
16.	Ozzie Albies	Senators	486.2
17.	Christian Walker	Redbirds	485.7
18.	Pete Alonso	Bums	483.4
19.	Ketel Marte	Saints	479.8
20.	Rafael Devers	Monarchs	477.2
21.	José Ramírez	Tribe	476.6
22.	Christian Yelich	Tigers	476.5
23.	Corey Seager	Tribe	475.3
24.	Paul Goldschmidt	Cubs	465.9
25.	Nathaniel Lowe	Bums	465.2

### **WHO'S HOT – HITTING**

	<b>Batters</b>	<b>Roster</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1.	Adam Duvall	Skipjacks	67.5
2.	Marcell Ozuna	Tribe	62.5
3.	Mookie Betts	Bombers	57.6



4.	Bryce Harper	Tigers	56.0
5.	Teoscar Hernández	Bombers	49.5
6.	Alex Bregman	Bums	48.8
7.	Kyle Schwarber	Wahoos	48.1
8.	Seiya Suzuki	Blues	47.5
9.	Corbin Carroll	Bears	45.5
10.	Cal Raleigh	Blues	45.1
11.	DJ LeMahieu	Redbirds	42.1
12.	Josh Rojas	Skipjacks	40.6
13.	William Contreras	Bears	39.6
14.	Alex Verdugo	Blues	39.5
15.	Luis Rengifo	Cubs	39.4
16.	Freddie Freeman	Skipjacks	38.3
17.	Connor Joe	Tigers	37.7
18.	Andrew Benintendi	Blues	37.5
	Jeremy Peña	Bombers	37.5
20.	Kerry Carpenter	Wahoos	37.0
21.	Shea Langeliers	Bears	35.6
22.	Ketel Marte	Saints	35.3
	Matt McLain	Tribe	35.3
24.	José Ramírez	Tribe	34.8
25.	Justin Turner	Tigers	34.6

**WHO'S NOT – HITTING**

	<b>Batters</b>	<b>Roster</b>	<b>Pts</b>
1.	Brandon Nimmo	Bums	-3.0
2.	Whit Merrifield	Senators	-1.3
3.	Oswald Peraza	Monarchs	-1.0
4.	Nolan Gorman	Saints	-0.9

**IN PRAISE OF ASHEVILLE AND  
THE TAR HEEL STATE**

Last weekend I had the great good fortune of visiting the beautiful Tar Heel state of North Carolina with the amiable and inestimable Brother Sunny. We flew from Kansas City to Asheville to catch a game Friday night at historic McCormick Field; then drove to Hickory, North Carolina on Saturday for a Hickory Crawdads game at LP Frans Field; and completed the circuit on Sunday by driving to Charlotte for a Knights game against the Memphis Redbirds at Truist Field. In a word, for a baseball fan, it was FAN-tastic!





McCormick Field

McCormick Field, built in 1924, immediately soared into my top 5 list of minor league ballparks attended. Located an easy half-mile walk from downtown Asheville and carved into the surrounding Great Smoky Mountains, McCormick Field is a ballpark lover's ballpark. I can understand why Ryan McGee decided to write an entire book about his one-year internship working for the Asheville Tourists baseball club.<sup>1</sup> So much history, and so many great features, I could devote an entire issue of *From the Bullpen* to it, but let me just include ten of my favorite tidbits:



The ballpark is named in honor of Dr. Lewis McCormick, a beloved physician and bacteriologist who implemented measures to contain the area's typhoid epidemic-breeding fly population, who unfortunately died before it opened. Don't ever let it be said that the guy couldn't "catch a fly."



Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig played at McCormick Field in an exhibition game, wherein Ruth supposedly said to Gehrig, "What a ballpark! Don't you smell it, Lou? Look at the honeysuckle around the outfield. What a beautiful place to play baseball!" Perhaps apocryphal, but so sweet!



On another trip to Asheville (from Knoxville) for an exhibition game, Babe Ruth took ill because of a reported excess consumption of hot dogs and had to be hospitalized and stay over for an extra day, leading to rumors about his

<sup>1</sup> See Issue No. 20, 07/27/23, of *From the Bullpen*, reviewing the wonderful book, *Welcome to the Circus of Baseball: A Story of the Perfect Summer at the Perfect Ballpark at the Perfect Time*.

death and later becoming referred to as the “bellyache heard around the world.”



For a three-year stretch (1956-1958) when there was no minor league baseball in Asheville, McCormick Field served as a stockcar racing venue.



Certain portions of *Bull Durham* were filmed at McCormick Field in 1987, including the part about Kevin Costner’s character, Crash Davis, hitting his final minor league home run at this ballpark to set a record at the end of his career.



The right field fence at McCormick Field has more advertisements on it than any other ballpark that I can remember seeing, and extends to a height of almost 40 feet, making it a difficult fence to homer over even though the distance at field level is only 297 feet.



There are more concession stands at McCormick Field at which to get beer, and multiple different kinds of beer, than you can shake a stick at. Asheville is the home to many breweries and features many homemade products right there at the ballpark.



Sunny-Stretch-McBlunder-McJester’s favorite mascot, Ted E. Tourist.



McCormick Field has sent many of its Tourist players on to play in the major leagues, from those who had a mere cup of coffee in the Show to Hall of Famers such as Willie Stargell and Eddie Murray. The late great Sparky Anderson coached the Tourists to a SAL League championship in 1968, while Cal

Sr. managed the squad from 1972-1974 while Billy and Cal Jr. served as Tourist batboys.



The winningest Tourist manager of all time was a character by the name of Joe Mikulik, who managed the team from 2000-2013, but who was best known for his unbelievable rant in 2006 when he became so incensed at an umpire's call that he ripped second base off of its mooring, carried it around the field, tossed it, and went into the dugout and started throwing around some baseball bats. Click [here](#) to watch this unbelievable tantrum.



*McCormick Field Entrance*



*McCormick Field*



Asheville itself is a beautiful and very cool city, home to many an old hippie and a favorite situs for large bachelorette parties, of which we must have seen ten or more during our brief stay there. It also has plenty of spots for after-game refreshments, and some fabulous restaurants, such as The Mayfair, where we had a delectable Southern breakfast on Saturday morning, including *non*-instant grits.



### HICKORY, N.C.

On Saturday night we saw a nailbiter of a game in Hickory featuring the Crawdads and the visiting Greenville Drive. LP Frans Stadium was bound to pale a little bit by comparison to McCormick Field, but is still a delightful place to catch a game. Not to mention that we got to see one of the starting pitchers throw at 102 mph, according to the scoreboard sign.



LP Frans Stadium



Sunny once again cozied up to the team mascot, in this case Candy Crawdad, and could not have been happier or more fulfilled because of it.



*Mrs. Conrad (Candy) Crawdad and Sunny*



*"Harry Canary" entertains the Crawdad Faithful.*



*"Mike Trout" looks to devour a Crawdad player.*

And of course, as on every trip, we spotted a Shamu doppelgänger, see below:



*He's Here, He's There, He's Everywhere!*

### **TRUIST FIELD-CHARLOTTE**

On Sunday afternoon we caught a game between the hometown Charlotte Knights and the visiting Memphis Redbirds in spectacular Truist Field, which I visited once before when it was named BB&T Ballpark in 2016. It is without a doubt one of the nicest, if not *the* nicest, of

minor league ballparks, and situated smack dab in the middle of downtown. I can definitely see this being the site of a major league stadium someday.

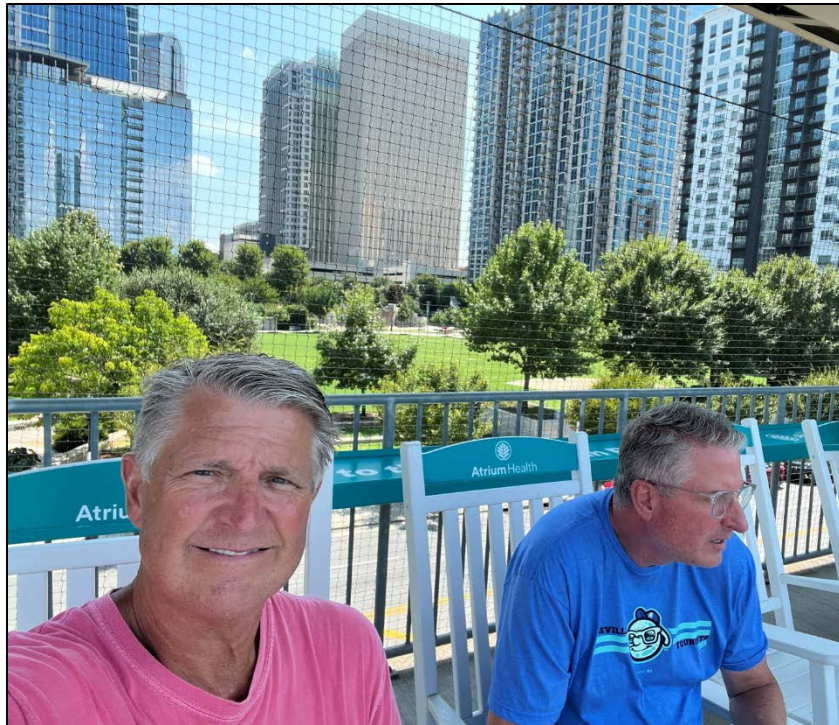


*Truist Field*

The only downer of this visit was that the Knights, shockingly, are able to run their team without a *single* mascot frolicking around and pumping up the crowd to a fever pitch. Their loss, Sunny's gain.

We weren't quite able to stay for the entire Knights/Redbirds ballgame because on Sunday we had to hustle up to get to the Charlotte airport *three hours* prior to our flight, as Itchie's HSL league Fretmeister Understudy could not sit still in his rocking chair for even another half inning.





*"Okay, Skipper, it's the third inning and we still haven't seen a mascot—let's head to the airport."*

### **THE OTHER CHIMNEY ROCK**

On our way from Asheville to Hickory we planned to do some sightseeing, including visiting the famed Biltmore Estate and the 250-room mansion erected for tycoon George Washington Vanderbilt in the late 1890s. However, when we found out that it costs 100 bucks apiece to get the guided tour, and 70 bucks apiece just to poke your nose inside the mansion, we decided that we didn't want to see it all *that* much and proceeded along our way.



After a breathtakingly beautiful drive along the picturesque Blue Ridge Parkway winding through the Great Smoky Mountains, we reached Chimney Rock State Park, a tourist mecca at

which you can hike three quarters of a mile through the woods, and then climb 500 stairs to the summit to be treated to a spectacular view of pretty much the entire county; or take an air-conditioned elevator to the top. Being the determined—some might say stubborn—old goats that we are, we sneered at the elevator option and hoofed our way up the steps to the top, and were rewarded with the view that you see below. Soaking wet and in need of an iron lung once we reached the summit, but so worth it, right Sunny?



A great baseball weekend in a beautiful state with a treasured friend. It gets no better than that.

## IN PRAISE OF: COORS FIELD

On Tuesday night while in the Mile High City for business, I was able to take in a baseball game at Coors Field with my old grade school chum, Larry Larson. It was a perfect August night and the Braves were in town, just one night after Ronald Acuña Jr. got mugged by a determined fan who wanted a selfie. Anyway, I think that there were more Braves fans in the stands than Rockies fans, resulting in the thunderous *Tomahawk Chop* war whoop dominating the arena several times, to the chagrin of Rockies loyalists.

While the Rockies were able to keep the score close and only lost by the tune of 3-1, the Braves dominated the game, rapping out a total of 15 hits and threatening to score in almost every inning. In one at-bat, Acuña hit a drive to the deepest part of center field with two men on base, narrowly missing a three-run homer with the Rockies center fielder making a superb catch at the outfield fence. This prevented me from witnessing another "first," that is, the first player to have 30 or more home runs with 60 or more stolen bases in the same season, since Acuña entered the night with 29 home runs. Of course, he will get there soon enough and could even end up being a 40/75 guy, which is insane.



*Two old Rockets Watching the Rockies*

All in all, a great night of baseball at Coors Field with one of my oldest and dearest friends, and such occasions are, as you all know, priceless.

\* \* \* \* \*

That's it for this edition, fellas. Hope you all have a fantastic Labor Day weekend! And Go Big Red!

Skipper