

Right, and when it was all over, I figured the Bonemen for \$44 in profits on their freeze list, which you see is even less than they in fact turned out to have.

But the thing is, if the Bonemen can hang onto that \$44 in the draft, they have a \$304 team, and that's a likely winner in our league.

Here's what appeared to be the next best freeze list:

player	sal	projected			actual	
		AP	+/-	x	\$	+/-
PUCKETT, K	30	33	3	x	28	-2
NEEL, T	15	22	7	x	19	4
NAGY, C	6	25	19	x	-6	-12
HERNANDEZ, R	15	40	25	x	38	23
total	66	119	53	x	79	13

*Pardon me, but that one sucks.*

Pardon me, but that's my freeze list.

*Oh, yeah, Nagy. Sorry.*

Perfectly all right. I'd say the same thing, probably, about any number of your freeze lists. Now, no way did I have us down for \$53 in profits. I figured Puckett \$30, Neel \$15, Nagy \$15 and Roberto Hernandez \$30: \$24.

*That's the next best?*

Yes. But you see that I in fact was still too optimistic. The whole trick to sizing up freeze lists is trying to have an even hand. If you give the Bonemen \$15 on Guzman, you give yourself \$15 on Nagy.

*How come you're keeping players who don't even have profits?*

Because they're hitters. And because, in the backs of our minds, Dollar Bill and I have a plan.

*Stage Four? You've been holding out, haven't you? I knew it!*

No, no, forget Stage Four. Doesn't exist. But we're ready to go in a certain direction that might put us in a slightly different corner of the room. The next best freeze list belonged to the Tooners; they were \$21 to the good. It trailed down to the Veecks, who had Randy Johnson at \$12 and that was it.

*I have to tell you, some of the freezes that I see under ADL -- I don't know... Who froze Brunansky for \$8? It's more than his average salary.*

Let me give you some other freezes for Brunansky on this salary sheet I have for the Heath leagues: Beizbol \$11, Baker's Dozen \$15, Cowtown \$10, Wolverine \$10. Some free-market prices: Lone Star \$11, Metropolitan \$12, Garden State \$18. But onward. Altogether the league froze 44 players at salaries totaling \$512. These players, I estimated, would earn \$692. So we had \$2608 left to spend on 232 players

who would earn \$2428. The inflation factor was 2608/2428: 1.07. Seven percent. If you had a player down for earning \$30, he would cost \$32 in this auction.

*Did you ever figure out what the real inflation was?*

No, but I can do it right now in a second. The 25 frozen hitters cost \$285 and ended up earning \$436. Plus \$151. The 19 frozen pitchers cost \$227 and earned \$283. Plus \$56. The 44 frozen players had \$207 in profits. We spent \$2608 to buy 232 players who earned \$2401. The inflation was actually nine percent.

*So you were under it? Inflation was higher than you realized?*

Which is what I hoped for. You're aware you have to overpay a little bit to get the good players, but what happens, little by little, if you overpay the right amount?

*You lose all your profits.*

And you end up with a team worth \$260.

*And you're in seventh place.*

Somewhere around there. So here's the first round.

Round 1										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	1	THOMAS, F	45	41	-4	MF	MF	Y		NAB
NOV	2	AGUILERA	36	34	-2	VEK	VEK	Y		GUN
BRC	3	GRIFFEY, JR	44	45	1	GUN	PAL		N	NAB
GUN	4	GONZALES, JU	36	41	5	VEK	VEK	Y		TNR
BON	5	ALOMAR, R	45	51	6	NOV	NOV	Y		NAB
BAG	6	WARD, D	37	42	5	BAG	BAG	Y		GUN
MF	7	HENDERSON, R	44	40	-4	NAB				NOV
PAL	8	FIELDER, C	31	25	-6	TNR	TNR	Y		VEK
VEK	9	BAERGA	31	38	7	NAB	NAB	Y		AMS
HAK	10	MUSSINA	27	15	-12	PAL	PAL	Y		NOV
NAB	11	MARTINEZ, CH	12	-2	-14	NOV				BAG
AMS	12	JOSE, F	35	17	-18	AMS				HAK
		average	35	32	-3					

"Nom" is the nominating team, "byr" the team that pays the cost. "Tpr" means a team has topping rights; when the bidding ends, you can buy a player that you have topping rights to by paying \$1 more. "Y" means yes, the team with the tipper exercised it; "n" means nix, no thanks. "L.b." is the last bid before the winning bid, or the winning bid that was then topped. It's what separates the wannabes from the would-have-beens later on in the season when everybody swears they bid \$44 for Roberto Alomar.

*I get that, but why the toppers?*

Sentiment, I guess. Basically, if you don't have anybody better to freeze you just keep a topper. They're not quite that innocent, but that's the idea.

*So the first player nominated was Frank Thomas and you had the topper to him. How do you decide who nominates first?*

By where we're sitting in the room. We're on the second floor over a scruffy bar; it's kind of an oblong with the auctioneer at one end, and we just go around and around. The Tooners put Frank Thomas out there right away and so would anybody; there's nothing subtle about it.

*You saying you actually had a bid price for Frank Thomas of \$45?*

Nope. Higher.

*Higher? In your book last year you said he would earn \$41.*

Maybe I did (although I'm allowed to change my predictions for my own draft, you know). The reason the bid price is different is in part because of inflation, in part because --

*Wait a second. Seven percent inflation is -- let me borrow your calculator. One-point-zero-seven times \$41 is... \$43.87.*

You see? It doesn't take much inflation to move the prices significantly.

*I want to hear the second part, because, if you had a measly \$24 in profits a moment ago, you've got \$20 now. If he earns \$41.*

Which he did, I might point out.

*How come the prediction says \$44 in Appendix A?*

Oh, man, if I haven't been able to explain that anywhere else, I sure can't explain it now.

*No, I know; you screwed up your prediction formula. So what's the other part?*

That if we didn't care about steals, he was worth much more than \$45.

*That lame old thing again? Bag the running game?*

We weren't sure. Remember, Thomas is the first player nominated. I've said 8,000 times before the draft I'm not paying more than \$40 for him. Every time I say it, all I'm doing is making more sure he's the first player nominated.

Everyone wants to stick Dollar and I, but they aren't sure we won't stick them back. The bidding gets very slow at \$40. At \$41 it looked like it was going to die. So, by making a big squawk about not overpaying, I thought I had saved us \$3. Worth it.

*Meaning you were going to top at any price?*

No, the limit was \$46. The Nabobs barely were able to say \$44; Walter Shapiro didn't look like he was going to dance with joy if we didn't top. But if someone had said \$45, we would have done just what we did do: Top it fast.

*Why fast? Why not act like it was a heist?*

There were two reasons we tried to make sure Thomas would be the first player nominated. We wanted it settled for our own sake, because obviously if we let him go, we were in the running game. And if we did top -- hence weren't in the running game -- we'd be getting a bargain while hopefully fanning the flames for the rest of the first round. You can see the second objective was hardly achieved.

*Maybe, but you do lose money in the first round. In fact -- let me borrow that again -- yep. You're overpaying by exactly nine percent.*

Is that right? Amazing. But look at the first 10 players: you call that overpaying? These are the best players anybody can think of, of every description (Clemens has been frozen at \$40). Everyone knows about inflation. Everyone knows about the power of a \$40 player earning \$40 versus the power of a \$20 player earning \$20 -- we're being bigger cheapskates than BW was because BW didn't have any freezes.

*If you had drafted again the next day, you think the prices would have been higher?*

Absolutely. Another thing to consider is that eight players reached their market value a dollar earlier. Even with the topper-holders topping like mad, people *still* were afraid to push prices.

*I don't see MF under the Lb.'s anywhere.*

Are you kidding? We had just spent almost 20 percent of our money on one player. And besides, there was no one else who fit our profile. Show me another player in the first round who would be terrific in three categories and didn't have a nickel of his salary wrapped up in steals. But we did have two people on our freeze list like that. Puckett was easily worth \$35 to us now, and Neel was easily worth \$20.

*This doesn't sound like any back-up plan.*

The back-up plan was letting Thomas go. You always have to have a back-up plan. The real key to an auction is adjusting quickly to what's going on. Do you see what the best play was -- by far -- in the first round?

*PAL? The one team that was able to turn down a topper?*

The Palukas? God no. Mark Goodman and Tony Lukas were already having fistfights over the decision to let Griffey go. An absurdly good price. Do you think they topped Mussina because they wanted him more than Junior? They were already so out of sync that they were trying to buy *back* Junior.

So what was it? Rickey? You're proud of yourself for nominating Rickey now that you don't want speed?

Come on -- child's play. And it didn't work, either. We were hoping people would get all excited about bidding on a player who *wouldn't* be snatched away by the topper.

Chito Martinez then.

Well, closer; clearly the Nabobs thought he was a bum. But the price is fair. He was frozen at \$10 in many leagues, and he went for \$15 in Cowtown and \$13 in America's Best, most likely not in the first round.

Duane Ward. Nobody's nominating players that they actually *want* in the first round; of course not. Except for the Bags. Steve Stoneburn sees what Aguilera stopped at, sees what else is happening, and he shoots his best topper right out there. The next round:

Round 2										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	13	CANSECO	41	10	-31	BRC	NOV		N	BON
NOV	14	MONTGOMERY	37	49	12	NAB	NAB	Y		BON
BRC	15	MCDOWELL	29	33	4	PAL				NOV
GUN	16	DEVEREAUX	28	12	-16	VEK	VEK	Y		BAG
BON	17	BUHNER	29	23	-6	AMS	AMS	Y		NOV
BAG	18	SIERRA	40	23	-17	PAL				BON
MF	19	HAMILTON	29	25	-4	AMS				BON
PAL	20	MOLITOR	36	44	8	PAL	PAL	Y		NOV
VEK	21	MATTINGLY	18	20	2	NOV				TNR
HAK	22	FRYMAN	31	30	-1	BON	NOV		N	TNR
NAB	23	MARTINEZ, E	25	1	-24	VEK				HAK
AMS	24	PALMEIRO	30	41	11	BAG				NAB
		average	31	26	-5					

Prices are going up already.

Down, don't you mean?

Up. These 10 players aren't nearly as attractive and they cost nearly as much. This is the BW National league awakening. The Palukas have come into this round smokin'. Jack MacDowell, without a topper, \$29; \$40 for Sierra. They take a breather while the Moose try to siphon more money up in steals, then throw their beloved Molly out just like Duane Ward, and get the biggest bargain so far.

Look at the Bonemen. Peter Kreutzer is in his second year in the league. He almost finished fourth the year before, while carrying out a two-year plan (new teams get no freezes). He's the one who had honest-to-god freezes; there wasn't room for these silly toppers, so now he just keeps pushing the inflation envelope, never panicking. Canseco? Topped. Montgomery? Topped. Sierra or Hamilton one more hit? Nah. Something has to give somewhere, and it's Nova. Mark Starr and Ron Givens have to point their thumbs down for the second time in this round. Their topper All-Star team is being dismantled.

You saying not to keep too many good toppers?

Keep as many as you have room for, but you surely can't buy them all.

You see Edgar, don't you? You think the Nabobs have a conscience?

What's this conscience stuff?

The third round:

Round 3										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	25	CARTER, J	42	27	-15	BRC				HAK
NOV	26	WHITE, D	29	26	-3	BON	VEK		N	TNR
BRC	27	CONE	25	25	0	NOV				AMS
GUN	28	BELLE, A	36	43	7	HAK	HAK	Y		BON
BON	29	FRANCO, JU	16	22	6	VEK	VEK	Y		BAG
BAG	30	CHARLTON	38	17	-21	AMS				GUN
MF	31	POLONIA	28	27	-1	AMS				HAK
PAL	32	MACK	36	18	-18	NOV	NOV	Y		HAK
VEK	33	REDUS	3	9	6	NOV				TNR
HAK	34	RAINES	31	26	-5	HAK				TNR
NAB	35	FARR	27	15	-12	GUN				MF
AMS	36	TETTLETON	25	22	-3	PAL				MF
		average	28	23	-5					

Once again, more money lost per player than in the first round.

Now onto the next --

Wait a minute. I'm just getting into it. You had the last bid on Steve Farr? Were you ever lucky. And when was the last time Fruit Loops helped in batting average?

That's why, sniff, we waved good-bye. The next round:

Round 4										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	37	ABBOTT, J	28	8	-20	GUN	BON		N	NOV
NOV	38	KEY	25	41	16	AMS	NAB		N	VEK
BRC	39	SALMON	21	28	7	BON				BAG
GUN	40	WEGMAN	22	1	-21	MF				NAB
BON	41	WHITAKER	16	15	-1	NOV	TNR		N	NAB
BAG	42	HENRY	28	6	-22	GUN				TNR
MF	43	HENNEMAN	28	24	-4	MF	BON		N	VEK
PAL	44	DAWSON	25	14	-11	VEK				MF
VEK	45	TAPANI	19	10	-9	VEK				BRC
HAK	46	ERICKSON	14	-10	-24	NAB				MF
NAB	47	RYAN, K	14	7	-7	BON				BAG
AMS	48	KNOBLAUCH	27	19	-8	BRC	BRC	Y		GUN
		average	22	14	-9					

The losses are mounting.

Especially for MF. What the hell are you doing spending \$22 for Wegman?

Trying to follow my advice. The B starting pitchers were going fast and the A's were gone. In the old days we would have put this money into a more reliable asset, like Tettleton, and dealt for a starting pitcher later. But it's easier nowadays to buy a good starting pitcher than it is to trade for one, and we felt it would be almost impossible to trade for one this particular season.

*Right, but you didn't buy a good starting pitcher.*

That was the flaw.

*Explain Henneman. In your book he hasn't earned \$28 in the last five years.*

Precisely what the Bonemen concluded. We stopped nominating rabbits long enough to get the Bonemen's one topper out there, and then we pushed it to get rid of their money.

*Then this new guy faked you out?*

Surprised us; I'll say that. But Henneman was a nice compliment to Hernandez, and the Bonemen were still sitting there with just Steve Howe. We weren't unhappy.

One more round:

Round 5										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	49	RUSSELL	20	27	7	TNR				BAG
NOV	50	PHILLIPS	17	24	7	TNR	GUN		N	HAK
BRC	51	TARTABULL	32	20	-12	VEK	VEK	Y		BAG
GUN	52	VIOLA	16	18	2	VEK				BRC
BON	53	NOKES	13	6	-7	BRC	GUN		N	BON
BAG	54	BURKS	20	18	-2	BAG				TNR
MF	55	VAUGHAN,G	22	26	4	TNR				GUN
PAL	56	VENTURA	29	18	-11	NAB				MF
VEK	57	SPRAGUE	10	12	2	GUN				TNR
HAK	58	LANGSTON	21	35	14	NOV	NOV	Y		NAB
NAB	59	BRETT	10	18	8	NOV				MF
AMS	60	JOYNER	14	19	5	TNR				NOV
		average	19	20	1					

*Hey, hey -- a profit. Now it's happening. It does pay to save your money, you just got to save it long enough. You hadn't shot your wad on Weggy and the Hen, you would've had Ventura and Brett, easy. You might even've had Viola. Or Langston.*

Okay, one more:

Round 6										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	61	RADINSKY	11	8	-3	BAG				VEK
NOV	62	RIPKEN,C	26	17	-9	HAK	HAK	Y		BON
BRC	63	WINFIELD	23	18	-5	MF	VEK		N	GUN
GUN	64	THIGPEN	5	-6	-11	BON				NAB
BON	65	BELL,G	24	5	-19	BON				GUN
BAG	66	HARPER	15	20	5	MF				NAB
MF	67	JACKSON,DAR	20	1	-19	NOV				PAL
PAL	68	GREENWELL	20	24	4	NAB				PAL
VEK	69	MAURER	1	dnp	-1	VEK				X
HAK	70	MCDONALD,B	15	26	11	BRC				BON
NAB	71	YOUNT	16	11	-5	BAG				TNR
AMS	72	MILLER,K	15	-3	-18	GUN				BAG
		average	16	10	-6					

*Oops. In the sixth round, and only three of the 12 making any money. That is awesome.*

The bargains *will* arrive eventually. You can't lose *more* than the profits that are on the freeze lists. But you're going to be kind of groping around in the basement at this point, no one too sure what they're touching.

*It looks like your Bonemen are losing their touch. Why are they betting \$5 on Thiggy?*

They shouldn't be. When you have the best freeze list, you let other people take the chances.

*You have to like Harper on your team better than Tettleton.*

I do. Sort of.

*But Winn~~ny~~ loses what Harper gets you, so you're not getting anywhere either.*

Are you sure Winfield doesn't earn \$23 on our team? He contributed in two categories and his batting average didn't hurt.

*It's not like no one's getting any points in steals, just because you aren't.*

What do you mean? We got two points. Another team, we're just starting to realize about now, is punting steals.

*Who?*

The Veecks.

*Golenbock's punting them?*

Uh-huh. And that's a good thing to notice, too, because in the crapshoot we take McLemore for \$1 instead of Naehring.

I'll take Naehring this year for \$1.

So would I. But as luck would have it, McLemore contributed much more than one steals point.

When did the crapshoot start?

It already has. The Veecks took Rob Maurer -- who's on the DL and therefore technically as eligible as Edgar -- as a future.

But I mean, the bottom feeding. Come on, a few more -- you have to play this out. You can pick them; I don't care if you hide all your blunders.

Here's the last round that anybody spent more than \$10 on a player:

Round 10										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	109	NILSSON	7	7	0	TNR				MF
NOV	110	GULLICKSON	1	0	-1	NOV				X
BRC	111	SNOW	13	10	-3	NAB				GUN
GUN	112	ALOMAR,S	5	7	2	BON				MF
BON	113	MAAS	5	3	-2	BRC				HAK
BAG	114	SAX	4	3	-1	GUN				VEK
MF	115	FELDER	10	2	-8	TNR				PAL
PAL	116	KELLY,P	9	15	6	TNR				PAL
VEK	117	HANSON	3	21	18	NOV				PAL
HAK	118	GIL	6	-3	-9	AMS				BRC
NAB	119	CALDERON	11	-1	-12	NAB				GUN
AMS	120	MACFARLANE	5	17	12	BRC				BAG
		average	7	7	0					

See how it is? Pretty much touchy feely, even though everyone has some money left. Essentially what's happened is that inflation has disappeared, but so has the talent.

Looks like the Moose are pushing hard for their second catcher.

We are. We could push harder, but what's the point?

And you're still nominating speed whenever you can.

Notice how many hitters are being nominated while there's still some money. Hanson is the best buy in this round, but he could have earned minus five again; it's much more galling to have Pat Kelly go for \$3. The Nabobs are aggressively pursuing the best remaining hitters, hitters who could have earned far more than the Nabobs paid; but the room is making sure the Nabobs pay.

As tough as this kind of draft is, it's in some ways more relaxing than in the old days. You can get up, stretch, go outside and look at the sky. Nothing outrageous is going to happen in your absence.

Here's the transition round into the true crapshoot:

Round 13										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	145	PATTERSON,B	2	1	-1	AMS				TNR
NOV	146	KARKOVIC	4	9	5	HAK				BAG
BRC	147	THON	3	7	4	BRC				MF
GUN	148	WILLIAMSON	2	1	-1	MF				GUN
BON	149	VALERA	1	-6	-7	BON				X
BAG	150	FROHWIRTH	3	8	5	BON				MF
MF	151	JAVIER	2	11	9	BAG				MF
PAL	152	OBANDO	3	3	0	PAL				NAB
VEK	153	LEITER,A	1	8	7	VEK				X
HAK	154	HENDERSON,D	5	7	2	MF				PAL
NAB	155	ZUPCIC	2	3	1	PAL				NAB
AMS	156	HUMPHREYS	1	1	0	AMS				X
		average	2	4	2					

People still have 72 slots to fill, but what do you have to look forward to if this is what you're getting now? Doubling your money may sound nice. Buying 12 players who between them are going to earn \$53 is not exactly putting together the '27 Yankees.

How come you didn't at least bid on Karkovice if you had that kind of money to spend on Hendu?

Like you said, can't show it all: in the eleventh round we filled out with Carlton Fisk.

Seventh is beginning to sound about right. Did you expect Javier to drain more money than that?

No, this was our first shot at McLemore.

Round 13 was Early Crapshoot. Here's Mature Crapshoot:

Round 16										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	179	GUTHRIE	3	-1	-4	PAL				??
NOV	180	LEACH	1	3	2	NOV				X
BRC	181	O'BRIEN,P	3	5	2	BRC				HAK
GUN	182	GUBICZA	2	-3	-5	MF				GUN
BAG	183	SOJO	2	-1	-3	HAK				BAG
MF	184	BOLTON,R	3	-8	-11	PAL				MF
PAL	185	TIMLIN	2	-1	-3	PAL				X
VEK	186	GALLEGO	1	13	12	VEK				X
HAK	187	ALVAREZ	2	23	21	HAK				X
NAB	188	MAYNE	1	3	2	NAB				X
AMS	189	DORAN	1	0	-1	AMS				X
		average	2	3	1					

The Bonemen have departed. Mike Cartusciello, our most excellent auctioneer, is starting to fade. He little notes, and no one quite remembers, who bid \$2 for Guthrie.

But I wouldn't be surprised if it was me. This is where the letter grades really kick in, and we had Guthrie down as a C+. When the Guns subsequently said "\$1,

Gubicza," I know I shouted \$2 before the Hackers could get their mouths open. Steven Levy, whose job it is to speak for the Hackers, readily admits the words were forthcoming. He switched to a four-letter word.

*It looks like you said \$1 and then immediately shouted \$2 for Bolton. You must have been starting to lose it.*

No doubt, but what I said in this instance was, "\$2 for R.Bolton." We really wanted him and I didn't want Mark Goodman to shout, "Two dollars!" Instead he shouted, "Three dollars!"

Three players later, Levy didn't make his Gubicza mistake and said, "\$2 for Wilson Alvarez." The first thing he said to after me the draft was, "I'll trade you Alvarez for Gubicza."

*But you wanted to trade Gooby for R. Bolton.*

And so it goes. Here's Round 17, vintage Late Crapshoot:

Round 17										
nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
TNR	190	WICKANDER	2	-2	-4	HAK				TNR
NOV	191	MONTELEONE	1	2	1	NOV				X
BRC	192	LEUIS,S	1	0	-1	BRC				X
GUN	193	DAVIS,S	1	-1	-2	GUN				X
BAG	194	NAHRING	1	6	5	BAG				X
MF	195	MCLEMORE	1	21	20	MF				X
PAL	196	WILKERSON	1	-1	-2	PAL				X
VEK	197	LIND	1	2	1	VEK				X
HAK	198	TINSLEY	1	0	-1	HAK				X
NAB	199	RIPKEN,B	1	-3	-4	NAB				X
AMS	200	KREUTER	1	15	14	AMS				X
		average	1	4	2					

*I thought you said you had the choice of Naehring or McLemore?*

I must have been mistaken. The Amaros had bought Leyritz for \$1 as their other catcher in Round 14.

*But the auction's over, right? It's a draft from now on.*

There would be one more \$2 player in Round 18 -- the Brancas snatched Mark Gardner away from the Tooners -- but, yes, it has been you-pick-I-pick, basically, since Wilson Alvarez. As in the reserve draft, order doesn't seem to matter, and we don't see any trump cards being played, like the DH gambit. Everyone's just filling in. The last 12 picks of the day:

nom	#	plyr	cost	earned	+/-	byr	tpr	y	n	l.b.
BRC	217	FREY	1	12	11	BRC				X
GUN	218	EMBRY	1	dnp	-1	GUN				X
VEK	219	GLADDEN	1	14	13	VEK				X
NAB	220	SEGUI	1	12	11	NAB				X
TNR	221	DOPSON	1	-3	-4	TNR				X
GUN	222	HONEYCUTT	1	6	5	GUN				X
VEK	223	DOHERTY	1	10	9	VEK				X
NAB	224	KAMIENICKI	1	8	7	NAB				X
GUN	225	NUNEZ,E	1	1	0	GUN				X
VEK	226	HOLMAN,B	1	dnp	-1	VEK				X
NAB	227	BANKS	1	4	3	NAB				X
VEK	228	WEBSTER,L	1	-1	-2	VEK				X
		average	1	5	4					

*Looks like Golenbock made out. Too bad Gladden went to Japan.*

Oh, he was long gone from the Veecks before that. The Nabobs also make some nice pick-ups, and these last 12 earn more than the players in Round 13 earn, but you don't see anybody in this \$1 scrap heap who shouldn't be there.

*When did the Moose close out?*

McLemore.

*You traded him, right, after you had enough steals to stay ahead of the Veecks?*

Tried to. But it was sort of hard to drum up interest in him. This is where the automatic salary-hike is effective. If his price didn't go from \$1 to \$15 because of being traded during the season, he would have been wonderful bait to dangle in front of teams that were out of it.

*You never thought the Moose were out of it?*

We never were! In early September we were in third. The categories where we were hurting -- wins, ERA and ratio -- are ones you can fly up through in a hurry, if you can just get hot. The whole season was like a McGwire pop-up; we just missed.

In the hypotheticals, our offense was everything that we were shooting for: 36 points for only \$172. With \$63 to spend on pitchers, filling in between Nagy and Hernandez, we could easily have gotten another 34 points, and that would do it.

*You weren't kissing off any pitching categories?*

No. The idea was that just one of the cheap starters -- Gubicza, Trombley or Wickman -- would pan out. Either Williamson or Alan Mills would do the middle relief thing. We would pile as many pitchers as we could onto our reserve list, and, of course, we'd work the waiver wires. As it is, we finished first in saves, in the hypotheticals and -- I'm not sure how -- even came in fifth in ERA. Some of the saves came from our failed starters, though, and we finished last in ratio. I sometimes think everything would have been fine if we had just bought a lefty.

*Are you serious?*

I guess it's my way of saying you're right: things would have been different if we had waited for Viola instead of springing for Wegman. We finished tied for third in the hypotheticals, with a little bit of power to spare.

*You made some bad trades?*

A few. Mainly what we did was fill our pitching holes -- by trades, but also through waivers and from the reserve list -- with the kind of dynamite that blew us wide open.

*I saw you had both Bere and Sele on your reserve list. Wish you had given them some play in your book.*

They got just as much play as Tyrone Hill and Dennis Rasmussen.

*But I didn't get it: How come you took so many rooks?*

The theory was that many would be called and a few would be chosen. We called them all.

*Needed the innings?*

Needed everything. There's no question that when you punt a category, there goes your margin of error anywhere else. Bere and Sele gave us 242 fine innings and 18 wins. Jeff Mutis, Cliff Young, Dwayne Henry, Russ Springer, Enrique Burgos, Brad Holman, Storm Davis, Gene Nelson, Domingo Jean, Mark Hutton, Bob Welch and Matt Maysey -- roughly in that order -- gave us 126 hideous innings and three wins. There were others too numerous to mention who scuffled.

*Maybe it didn't matter, with the kind of reserve list the Bags had. Who won in the hypotheticals?*

The Bags.

*Oh. Well, you didn't have parity then. See, that's what I keep telling my partner, when he wants to punt a category: suppose you need more than 70 points?*

The Bags didn't get more than 70 points.

*They didn't?*

They finished first in the hypothetical final standings by 12 points, drafted almost \$150 of positive value on their reserve list, and by the last week they had managed to whittle themselves down to 67 points, with 10 points separating the first seven teams.

*Why are you shaking your head?*

*I don't believe you guys. My partner's right. A bunch of clowns.*

We enjoy ourselves. Any other questions? I think we've covered it, don't you?

*Come on, tell us who won? What happened?*

Don't you have enough leagues to worry about?

*I'm not worried. But your book's going to be hurting if you let it end like this.*

The Bags won. With 68 points. In the last three weeks, the Bonemen, the Nabobs and the Hackers all took a shot at him. The Veecks were closing hard at the end. But they pulled it together on the last weekend and won by four points. The Hackers finished second. Ten points still separated the top seven teams.

*Yeah, yeah, but explain how you almost blow a 12-point lead out of the draft and piss away the kind of reserve list he had. Which I think he lucked into anyway, if you want to know the truth.*

I'll tell him that.

But Stoneburn would agree. He nearly pissed away his entire reserve list because he had no better idea than anyone else what was actually there. After Danny Darwin had one good outing, he was offered Gerald Williams off the Nabobs' reserve list, and he jumped at it. Billy Hatcher was riding the pines behind Zupcic in April, but the Hackers needed a warm body to replace Tinsley; they offered Hammerin' Bob Hamelin, and Stoneburn was on a roll. Nobody wanted Flash Gordon, so he finally was activated for one week as a Bag, during which time he gave up four runs, five hits and three walks in five innings. After he was dropped, the Bonemen claimed him.

Nor did Stoneburn know what kind of team he had drafted; that's why we play the season, to find that out. But combing other people's rosters, he spotted a little bit of speed on the Veecks that was useless to them. He offered Palmeiro for Devereaux. The Veecks thought it was reasonable. And then Stoneburn asked for the vigorish: the Veeck's Pennington for the Bags' Radinsky. The Veecks balked. The Bags threw in Thome and it was a deal.

Stoneburn had begun this campaign earlier than most -- during the winter he had traded a \$4 Darling for a \$12 Finley, a \$6 Borders for a \$23 Olerud -- and he worked hard all season. When it was all over, the Bags had gained in trades 67 homers, 317 ribbies, 35 steals, 17 wins, 10 saves and, well, not the best 263 innings in the world: 5.74 ERA and 14.64 ratio.

Unfortunately, to get this, the Bags had given up 109 homers, 420 ribbies, 63 steals, 33 wins, 5 saves, and 490 good innings: 3.79 ERA and 11.65 ratio.

*I hope they got some batting average.*

Gained: a .265 batting average in 2292 AB. Given up: a .263 batting average in 3216 AB. A little bit.

*Well, he won anyway, right? That's all that counts.*

That's the way he sees it. Having finished second by one point the year before, thanks to an outing by Flash in the last week, he's seen it both ways.

*My god, and then he went to him again.*

And now the Bonemen are building themselves another freeze-list juggernaut with Flash Gordon. Along with Alan Mills.

*What are Bere's and Sele's prices for next year?*

Ten dollars.

*You going to keep them?*

You bet your boots. Until we get a better offer.

*Who else do you have to freeze? I'll help you size them up.*

No thank you.

*What do you mean? It could be helpful. We could handicap your league and show the inflation factor.*

Handicap your own leagues. We're done.

*You ever been in an NL league?*

I am in one. Rather I have an all-NL team, except for Rickey Henderson, in a mixed league. It's a computer league. It has 229 categories.

*No kidding? All the guff you've given us over the years about mixed leagues?*

And all-star leagues. And sabermetricians. See? I'm a hoax.

Um, I think I've got to tell you something.

*What's that?*

I didn't beat Bill James.

*What do you mean?*

I didn't beat him. I didn't have a better won-lost record.

*What are you talking about? You beat the crap out of him. I saw it. I was watching. In one of the match-ups you beat him 10-nothing and you didn't even say anything. I couldn't believe it.*

I didn't beat him.

*You're tired. That's all. I'll go home now. You take a nap. When you wake up, you'll know you beat him.*

I know I didn't. I added it up at some point. Every hitter in both leagues. Whoever was closer, the only ties being when BJ and AP had the same numbers. And I didn't win. It was close. I won one league and he won the other -- I don't even remember which was which now. Overall I believe he won by five: 211 to 206 with about 30 ties. Something like that.

*You didn't write it down?*

Heck no, I threw it away. Couldn't understand it.

*Maybe it's because he was so far over in stolen bases. Could've made up for being under everywhere else.*

That's what I was thinking. And he seemed to win more than his share of the little guys -- people like Alex Cole and Chris Donnels -- maybe by cheating on at-bats.

Hey -- does your *partner* understand similarity scores?

*I'll ask him.*

Would you? Thanks a lot.

*No problem. If we come up with something I'll send it to you.*

I'd appreciate it. Because I know I won. There can't really be any question.

*It says so on the cover. You must have.*

I didn't write the cover.

Not all of it.

*Relax. It says that on the back of every cover. We're used to it.*

I really did want to document it. I planned to be different.

*But since it came out wrong, you threw it away. I understand.*

The evidence is all there. You can figure it out yourself.

*My partner's got the actual predictions both of you made for last year. He can handle it. I wish you would let me see the predictions you've made for this year.*

I would. Except I haven't made them yet. I better get to that.

*You really haven't done them yet? It's kind of late, isn't it?*

The later, the better, I always say.

Where do you think Brian Harper's going to sign?

*The Red Sox. Want me to help?*

The Red Sox? Of course. What's good is that it's in the American League.

*What's good is that he'll get a lot of doubles. Make sure you raise his doubles.*

I don't worry about doubles.

Brian Harper ... Brian Harper ...

Good-bye now. I really can do this myself. I'm a big boy.

*So long then. Good luck. I'll talk to my partner.*

Thanks.

Oh yeah -- thanks!

Brian Harper...

I do hope you stay in the league. I don't have you on my mixed-league team.