

BRASSBALL: NEWS AND NOTES

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FREE AGENCY: Christmas Comes Early For Many Teams

It would be an understatement to say that some money was spent in this most recent addition of "Let's Make a Deal!" Considering almost 400 million dollars left the coffers of our 24 teams, it is reasonable to expect that more than a few clubs will be cutting back on the Christmas bonuses for all their employees. Here is some of what transpired.....

Knowing you can never have too much pitching, *Box City* inked FOUR starting pitchers for this year and beyond. John Burkett, Brett Saberhagen, Doug Drabek, and Rick Krivda will all deliver the mail for the Parcelmen for the next couple years.

Channel Island dropped a cool 30 million dollars in an attempt to win their 2nd straight NL West title. Among the newcomers are Danny Darwin, Mark Wohlers, Dante Bichette, Mark Clark, Paul Assenmacher, and Ed Sprague. If it results in a division crown, it was money well spent.

Long Island looks hungry again, after their sub-par 1997 season. Bobby Jones joins Kevin Appier and Alan Benes in the Tiger rotation. They swiped Trevor Hoffman from division rival Motor City, and boy will he help the Tiger pen! Ellis Burks and Otis Nixon are newcomers to the outfield, which needed help desperately.

For the 2nd consecutive season, *Naptown* got "stung" in the wallet by one of their star outfielders. Last year it was Brian Jordan who cost the 'Lems big bucks to re-sign. This year it was Jim Edmonds. Probably the most coveted free agent this year, Jimmy cost Naptown in excess of 14.5 million for the next five years.

Richmond looks to regain the top spot in the AL Central this year, and added Chuck Finley to an already formidable starting rotation. Tim Lincecum will add some punch to their outfield as well.

We were all wondering when the floodgates from *St. Lucie's* bank account would open up. Well, it did this month, as the Snook spent over 40 million in an effort to keep their team at the top of the AL East. In addition to re-signing most of their big names, the Snook went out and tabbed hurlers Tim Lincecum, Mike Timlin, and Chuck McElroy.

Wauwatosa might just make some noise this year, and it looks like they know it too! By bringing in veterans like Doug Jones, Rickey Henderson, and Bob Patterson for big dollars, the Wizards might be casting a few evil spells this year!

And, oh yeah. The Champs from Bloomington added two more quality arms.....just what they need! As if their rotation is not dominating enough, the Bees went out and added quality relievers Jeff

Shaw and Randy Myers. Add in the returning Mariano Rivera, and the Bees will be at the top of the pitching charts again this year.

*** I have not included a complete free agent signing report in this newsletter, as almost all of you should have received a report via E-mail from Rob. If you would like another copy for some reason, let me know, and I will be sure you get one.

NEW ROSTERS

In this newsletter, you will receive up-to-the-minute rosters, covering all the action over the past month. Please take more than a few minutes to review your team, and let me know of any inaccuracies you find.

TRADES

100. Minnesota trades Bill Spiers to Wauwatosa for Braden Looper, McGraw #1, and 100k.

101. Channel Island trades Reggie Sanders and Warren Newson to Richmond for Bernard Gilkey and Craig Grebeck.

102. Naptown trades Vinny Castilla to Cook County for Dean Palmer and Chris Snopek.

WELCOME!!!

We are once again, a 24-team league! Our final open team has been filled. Dave Adams is the name, and he will assume ownership of the squad affectionately known as "TEAM X". I assume you'll be wanting to re-name the team at some point, huh Dave?

30-Man Rosters

RELAX!! It is not quite that time....yet. Remember though, you must have your 30-man roster out to me by January 25th!

For those of you who are new, the players you designate to your 30-man roster are exempt from the annual "rookie" draft in February. All other players on your roster who are not "protected" may be selected by any other team. One exception is your amateurs WHO WILL NOT RECEIVE A CARD this coming season. They need not be placed on your 30 man roster, and cannot be selected off your

team during the draft. Those amateurs WHO WILL RECEIVE their 1st card this year must be signed to a minor or major league contract, and need to be protected if you want to ensure keeping them.

As the game company is about to release those players who will receive CARDS, you may begin sending in your signing announcements for your current amateurs. PLEASE NOTE: "CARDED" denotes the player actually receiving a real card by the game company. Unless I am terribly wrong, some players exist on the computer version of the game, but do not actually receive cards. Please note this distinction.

UPCOMING DEADLINES

40\$ dues!!!...(for those who have not paid up)

January 25th: 30-man protected lists.

That's all for now!!

NEXT MONTH:

--FINAL DRAFT ORDER

--Amateur Contract Signings

The Fish Wrap
The unauthorized report of the Portland Steelheads

For years to come the question will be asked: 92-70... Was it worth it? With the 1997 season in the books, and the Steelheads coming within an eyelash of the greatest upset in Brass History, we take a look back at the season that almost was a dream....

From the beginning of the new Brash Brass ownership of the Portland Steelheads, team owner Andrew Scot Bolsinger set his sights on making a splash, and in hurry. First eyebrows were raised as the team traded away arguably the best minor league system to field a competitive team in the year of the "Bee." "Short of a plane wreck at Bloomington airport, they have no chance," one owner admitted when speaking of the Steelheads stated desire of taking on the Bees. Undaunted the team continued to move and shake and create with a clear set of goals: 1) Field a competitive team immediately. "From the minute we got into the league it seemed most all of the teams were conceding to the Bees and trading away for the future. We felt we needed to make a statement," stated Bolsinger. 2) Build a good "playoff team" and seek to create a match-up problem for the Bees. The first part of this was easier than the second. The team focused on getting three good starters, a quality closer and a consistent offense that would play well in the vast expanse of Dodger Stadium. All of the above came together well with the additions of Traschel, Schilling, Nen, Galaragga and Bonilla. "For a team that had so few weaknesses like the Bees, creating a match-up advantage was next to impossible," stated fiery team manager Davey Lopes. "But all in all I liked the way we matched up better than most of the other teams." Even the Bees manager was heard saying, "they create some problems for us." (kind of like the Texans created some problems for Santa Ana at the Alamo). 3) Get the chance to take a shot. You will only win, when you give yourself a chance. The cost was very high (Guerrero, Rolen, Rivera, Lee, Wright.....) but when the dust settled, it was the Bees vs. the Steelheads in round one.

A Playoff to Remember...

The team held back a pesky East Indy team to capture the Wild Card and the inevitable first round match up with the Bees. The moment of truth was finally upon the team. "Those first three games were magical," said team leader Bobby Bonilla. Almost causing a citywide shutdown in Bloomington, the Steelheads took their brazen attack on the road and stole the first two out of Indiana. Portland was excited, but still hesitant. "If the plan holds to form, we are going to make history," said an ecstatic Bolsinger upon returning to Oregon and the power hitter's graveyard of Chavez Ravine. From the first day when the park was named, the idea of Bee bombers hitting very deep outs to center field in a playoff upset had danced in the heads of the Portland Brain trust.

Game three was a dream come true: Portland wins to take a 3-0 series lead. The city was drunk with hope (and microbeer). Game four: A rematch of Andy Pettitte and Kevin (29 wins) Brown. Pettitte had outdueled Brown in game one. If he could do it again it would be over. In the fifth inning the Bees finally broke out for an early lead. Radio announcer Vin Scully prophetically stated, "its almost eerie.. if you didn't know better you would think the Bees were playing for the sweep tonight." Indeed the fear was felt around the city as those early runs crossed the plate: Has the magic run out?

With the Bees taking game four, Davey Lopes made a serious mistake. Knowing he had to pitch Doug Johns one start in the series since Schilling could not go on four days rest, he opted to use him in game five. In essence he robbed Steve Traschel of a chance to use the home field advantage that was so highly regarded to steal the series. Johns was pounded, the Bees started to believe and the series returned for two barn burners in Bloomington. "That cost us the series. Had we thought about it, we would have used Johns in game six and given our boys a chance to win at home," said a distraught Lopes. "That will burn my gut forever." Game six and seven were close fought battles with Mariano Rivera saving the day for the Bees in both games bringing the soon to be champs back from the brink of disaster and a 0-3 deficit. In game seven Lopes used six pitchers, included an exhausted Schilling to keep the game tied into the eighth inning. Handing the ball to Closer Robb Nen with two outs in the bottom of the 8th and only one on, Lopes still felt the team was going to pull it out. It was not Nen's night. Five straight hits and a

Ron Gant HR later and the Bees had pulled off the sweep. The Portland faithful returned to their breweries to cry in thier beer.

Wrapping it up...

Lacking leaders in virtually every league category it is hard to imagine this Steelhead team posting 92 wins and taking the Bees to the wire. But many players had notable season's leading to the overall success. "This was a true team effort," stated Curt Schilling. Below are team awards and honorable mentions for 1997:

MVP: Ray Durham, 2B. Ray did it all for the Steelheads. He was the only Steelhead who played in all 162 games. He provided great defense, speed and batting. Final totals: .290, 41 DO, 3 TR, 6HR, 97 Runs, 45 SB's and an amazing 57 sacrifices. For the season he was successful in 57 of 60 sac attempts! Steelhead management was severly disappointed that Durham was passed over for the All-star game when he produced similar numbers to the league reps at 2B but did it playing home games at Chavez Ravine.

Honorable Mention: Bobby Bonilla and Jose Valentin. Bonilla quietly produced 113 RBI's and 65 Runs scored during the season becoming the team's best run producer. Final Totals: .278-16-113. Valentin had numbers that rivaled many of the league's best at SS. Only his defense hurt him in the MVP consideration. Final Totals: .280-22-83.

Strong Arm: Curt Schilling. The team's pitcher of the year was a tough battle between Steve Traschel (16-10, 3.20, 8CG's) and Curt Schilling (18-7, 3.09, 2CG's), each of whom put up nearly identical numbers. The late arm trouble to Traschel and Schilling's strong performance in the playoffs gave him the slight nod. Traschel gets honorable mention.

Top Rookie: Todd Hollandsworth, CF. Slowed at the end of the season by injuries, Hollandsworth still put together a commendable rookie campaign, finishing third in the league voting. Hollandsworth was consistantly solid in all catgories: .280, 29DO, 5Tr, 18HR, 71R, 76RBI's, 19SB's and only 2 E's.

BATTING LEADERS:

<i>Batting Average:</i>	Ray Durham, .290	<i>Hits:</i>	Bobby Bonilla, 177
<i>Runs:</i>	Ray Durham, 97	<i>RBI's:</i>	Bobby Bonilla, 113
<i>Stolen Bases:</i>	Ray Durham, 45	<i>Home Runs:</i>	Jose Canseco, 24
<i>Doubles:</i>	Ray Durham, 41	<i>Triples:</i>	Todd Hollandsworth, 5
<i>BB's:</i>	Jose Canseco, 76	<i>Strike-outs:</i>	Andres Galaraga, 136
<i>Slugging:</i>	Jose Valentin, .506	<i>On Base:</i>	Ray Durham, .376

PITCHING LEADERS:

<i>Wins:</i>	Curt Schilling, 18-7	<i>ERA:</i>	Curt Schilling, 3.09
<i>Saves:</i>	Robb Nen, 34	<i>Strike-outs:</i>	Curt Schilling, 181

Looking Ahead...

This reporter has been critical of the Portland Management for the revolving door with the team's young talent. But having watched the winning season, and the incredible series with the Bees, one can't help that think this might be the start of an fantastic rivalry. Perhaps we will regret the great talent let go, but for this season anyway, it was a blast. Any looking at the Bee's future, there is little doubt that they are going to be around for a long time, making the "no time like the present" attitude more appealing because it really isn't going to get any easier.

Clearly the Steelheads have some work to do. Young talent like Ernie Young and Scott Stahoviak were huge disappointments. The OF is a mess. The Bullpen is burnt out and the Bees will be back as strong as ever. But once again they wasted no time in shaking the team up. The number one priority of the Steelheads according to Davey Lopes was finding a bonafide lead-off man. The quick trade of Andy Pettitte and a #1 brought just the man in the form of highly coveted Brady Anderson, along with up and coming young pitcher, Fransico Cordova. "We were willing to pay a lot for Anderson. He is the poster boy of what a Steelhead is!" stated Bolsinger.