

THE LEAGUE TO BE NAMED LATER
ROTISSSE-MEMO from the League Office
Late March 1995

Well. The League Office has been waiting patiently for more than seven months now for the 1994 season to resume, but it's starting to look like maybe we should just salute DAN'S FEVER, the 1994 LTBNL champ, and get on with our other off-season business. As always, that includes the Annual Season Wrap-Up Newsletter, our annual collection of crackpot awards, half-baked analysis, and shots across the bows of other owners. (Maybe, though, we should just write two-thirds of a Newsletter, and end it in mid-sentence.)

The labor unrest closed down the most exciting baseball season in half a century, to quote one interested observer, and resulted in the cancellation of the World Series for the first time in ninety years, something two world wars, the great depression, and a massive earthquake couldn't accomplish. The effects have been devastating to the money-grubbing-scum players (some of whom lost as much as \$30,000 per day in salary), and also to ticket takers, bar owners, ushers, the guys who sell peanuts outside stadiums, Indians fans, and so on. We'll never know if Matt Williams was going to hit 62 homers, if Tony Gwynn could have hit .400, or if Jim Deshaies could have surrendered 40 homers. It's almost even possible to feel sorry for the club owners, some of whom, although they are also money-grubbing scum, obviously have legitimate concerns about the economic future of the game (although it is noted that some owners lost less money due to the strike than they would have lost if the full season had played out).

But what about us? Aren't we the real victims here? Did anybody even consider the Rotisserie impact of the strike? Was it really necessary to shut down the closest and most exciting pennant race in LTBNL history just so a lame-ass used car dealer can continue to operate a baseball franchise in Milwaukee? (Most significant contribution to American culture: "Laverne & Shirley." Except for beer.)

Consider these excerpts from an August article in the Wall Street Journal (thoughtfully faxed to the League Office by the Doug Outs):

More addictive than crack cocaine, more consuming than flesh-eating bacteria, Rotisserie is a hobby with a million-odd adherents who, deprived of their fix, could well prove a menace to society. Some warn darkly of a turn to Prozac, NFL football, jai alai -- even stock car racing.

Richard Ivry, an associate professor of psychology at the University of California in Berkeley -- and commissioner of a Rotisserie league -- says that box scores, with their periodic jolts of upbeat statistics, provide stimulation similar to the "intermittent reward" given to laboratory rats as they run mazes. When denied such rewards, the rats exhibit "severe frustration and increases in aggressive behavior, and I think we'll see the same with Rotisserie owners."

Others predict trouble for industries closely tied to the game. Peter Goldberger, an official with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union, spends several hours a week on the phone -- "most of it with people I don't even like" -- haggling over trades or rules. "I would not be surprised to see AT&T stock take

a dive as Rotisserie players stop calling and faxing each other," he says. Another potential casualty: USA Today newspapers. "Why would anyone buy it now?" Mr. Goldberger wonders. "For the color weather map?"

Indeed, once the strike hit, calls to the League Office slowed to a trickle, as devastated owners, reeling from being compared to lab rats and crack addicts, holed up to focus their attention on Ken Burns' mega-series, the O.J. trial, and football. (Some owners did call the League Office once in a while to apologize for not having called.) The League Office's once-beleaguered secretary, complaining of an unreasonably high percentage of non-Rotisserie, work-related calls, quit. Lately, when owners do contact the League Office to talk Rotisserie, it's only to pepper the League Office with questions that it can't answer: What if this thing doesn't get settled? What do we do about the draft? Should we play with "replacement" players? Why are captains of industry like Ted Turner and George Steinbrenner letting a car dealer named "Bud" hold them hostage? And why does that Fehr guy always look like somebody just told him he ate a bad cheese danish?

There are no answers to any of these questions. As of this writing, the two sides appear as far apart as ever, and there appears to be no urgency on either side, despite the fact that the season is scheduled to start in a matter of weeks. A federally appointed (and apparently clueless) mediator has called the dispute the most difficult he has ever seen. Both sides listened to an ultimatum from the President of the United States and said, in essence, "bite us." ESPN's Peter Gammons has used the phrase "nuclear winter" over 700 times. Newt Gingrich has said that the strike could be settled if the two sides went on a retreat where they prayed and watched "Field of Dreams." (We're not making this up!) Some owners are preparing for Scabscam '95 by rounding up refrigerator deliverymen with 75-mph fastballs; others are devoting all their energy to holding the line on the one-dollar hot dog. The players, hoping that the NLRB will get them an injunction, are doing nothing other than preparing to physically restrain Lenny Dykstra and Greg Swindell from crossing a line of replacement picketers.

Does anyone care even a little bit about the "issues" that are supposedly involved in this work stoppage? It's way too late to take sides in this mess. This is mutually assured self-destruction, after all. Bud Selig is evil. Don Fehr is evil. Both have, in the words of Bob Costas, failed the people they represent and the game itself. All that ought to matter now is getting a settlement in time to assure a full and uninterrupted 1995 season -- a prospect that looks less and less likely every day. Having said that, however, it probably comes as no surprise that the League Office, speaking in its own individual capacity only, and by no means purporting to speak for the LTBNL as a whole, finds itself philosophically opposed to the concept of "Replacement Baseball." As a tactic, it may be brilliant, or it may fail miserably. But it is difficult to believe that ownership plans to wheel out a collection of career minor leaguers and beer league players and call them major league teams, and play major league games that they say will count in the major league standings. Does anyone want to watch these games? Do national networks want to broadcast them, and do advertisers want to support those broadcasts? As the League Office wrote in an impassioned, if incredibly naive, plea to Bud Selig: Even the threat of "replacement baseball" is a fraud, a farce, and a slap to

the face of the knowledgeable fan. If owners are truly serious about inflicting "replacement players" on the game of baseball, they have no sense of what it is that makes baseball special: its history and tradition, its celebration of individual confrontation in a team context, and above all, its continuity from year to year. Baseball these days seems about as "special" as Major League Indoor Lacrosse.

Okay, go ahead and say it. The League Office really ought to get a life. (Footnote: The League Office swears that the preceding paragraph was not written by Ken Burns or George Will.)

But seriously, after much reflection, as well as a sincere attempt to disregard its own personal feelings, the League Office has come to the conclusion that Replacement Rotisserie is probably not practical. For one thing, we've never heard of most of these players, and so far the owners appear determined to keep it that way. The clubs have been extremely secretive about their replacement rosters, and many of the players appearing in the Grapefruit and Cactus League games apparently still have not decided whether they will be regular season replacements. Even if we knew who the players would be, there's probably no reference material we could turn to to learn anything about them; these guys for the most part are not going to be legitimate major league prospects (although a few of them have had a cup of coffee in the majors). To choose up sides would seem much more a crapshoot than a real contest of skill. Then there's the question of what we would do if real major leaguers start to trickle across the picket lines. Are we going to let somebody buy Lenny Dykstra with their FAAB money? And what would we do when the strike ends and all of the real players go back to work? Would we count the stats compiled up to that time, or crown a Scab Champ and start from scratch? Do we try to assemble everyone a second time for the "real" draft? Can we in good conscience ask our out-of-town owners to journey to Cincinnati twice, for a replacement draft and then for a "real" one?

Obviously, we are wide open to suggestions, but at this point the League Office is inclined to simply wait it out. Whenever this thing settles, whether it's late March, mid-April, or July, the clubs are going to need some significant amount of time to sort through the confusion and sign players (at this writing there more than 800 unsigned players, and about a quarter of them are free agents). The players are going to need at least two to three weeks of spring training. We should have plenty of time, after a settlement is announced, to submit freeze lists and plan the best damn Auction Draft we have time to slap together. According to the "Fantasy Report" column in the March 15 Baseball Weekly, this is the approach more than 90 percent of rotisserie leagues will take. If anyone has any other ideas, please speak up. If some owners are interested in Replacement Rotisserie, perhaps they could engage in some sort of limited contest among themselves until the strike ends.

But enough about the strike. This newsletter is supposed to be about the 1994 Year In Review. As always, we have been guided by the maxim, If you can't say something nice about someone, at least try to make it amusing. And also as usual, we solicited contributions to the Newsletter from other owners, and received, well, nothing.

When Mock-Commissioner "Bud" Selig cancelled the balance of the MLB season on September 14, Dan's Fever breathed an ambivalent, but audible, sigh of relief. For it was then that, despite the silliness

that was major league baseball, the Fever was crowned the 1994 LTBNL champion, by the slim margin of only one point over QuagMyers and Green Monsters. (Some owners suggested, presumably with tongue-in-cheek, that the LTBNL not crown a champion, but roll 1994's pot over into '95. Surely it was coincidence that those teams finished out of the money.)

For the Fever, it means their third Yoo Hoo shower in the six-year history of the LTBNL, and, because the season was shortened by the strike, a big ol' asterisk engraved next to their name on the coveted Cup to be Named Later.

Here again are the final standings:

	Batting	Pitching	Total	Behind
1 Dan's Fever	31.0	34.5	65.5	--
2 QuagMyers	41.0	23.5	64.5	1.0
3 Green Monsters	27.0	37.5	64.5	1.0
4 Wrecking Crew	26.0	35.0	61.0	4.5
5 Gregory Peckers	35.0	25.5	60.5	5.0
6 Karnold Knowledge	38.0	22.0	60.0	5.5
7 Show Hofffs	32.0	23.0	55.0	10.5
8 Underdaws	18.5	28.0	46.5	19.0
9 Patrick Division	14.0	32.0	46.0	19.5
10 Candy Stripers	23.0	12.0	35.0	30.5
11 Doug Outs	20.0	14.0	34.0	31.5
12 Sol Train	6.5	25.0	31.5	34.0

The QuagMyers were awarded second place over the Green Monsters under the tie-breaker rule: In head-to-head competition, the Quags bested the Monsters in five of the eight categories. In another category, saves, the Quags and Monsters finished in a dead heat, with 54 apiece. As they have pointed out several times, with just one more save, the Monsters would have finished second outright. High irony, considering that the Monsters and Quags swapped closers prior to the start of the season (John Wetteland for Randy "Quag" Myers and Shawon Dunston).

How close was 1994 LTBNL pennant race? Consider this: The just-released 1995 Official Rotisserie Rule Book lists the top ten most competitive Rotisserie leagues in the country, as compiled by Roti-Stats, the stats service of the original Rotisserie League. With an average of only 1.25 points separating its top five teams, the LTBNL would have finished second if it had been included on the NL Rotisserie League list. (Interestingly, the most competitive NL league was something called the "Patrick Division League." And alarmingly, the sixth-closest mixed league was the "Yet to be Named League.")

Many owners eagerly await each year the publication of the standings of the "Hypothetical League." As everyone must know by now, the Hypothetical League purports to evaluate which rotisserie team fared the best in compiling its original 23-player roster, through freeze lists and the auction, and shows where each team would have finished had it competed the whole season with its original roster. (Some owners may be inclined to try that next year after they review the Hypothetical League). Each team's 23-man roster following the auction is input into the computer, the statistics are generated, and the hypothetical results are printed below. The theory is that by comparing the Hypothetical League with the actual final standings, perhaps it can be determined which rotisserie GMs improved their teams

throughout the season by trades and other maneuvering -- and perhaps also which teams managed their way out of contention.

THE HYPOTHETICAL LEAGUE

		BA	HR	RBI	SB	W	Sv	ERA	Rat	TOTAL
1	Monsters	10	6	7	10	9.5	11	8	12	73.5
2	Nowledge	11	11.5	12	5	12	4	3	9	67.5
3	Fever	6	10	9	9	9.5	2	10	7	62.5
4	Division	5	7	8	4	11	5	12	10	62.0
5	Quags	8	11.5	11	12	1	7.5	5	5	61.0
6	Show Hoffs	12	8	10	2	3	7.5	6	4	52.5
7	Wrckng Crew	3	4	5	11	6	12	4	6	51.0
8	U-Dawgs	4	1	1	7	8	6	11	8	46.0
9	Sol Train	1	2.5	3	1	4	10	9	11	41.5
10	Peckers	9	2.5	2	8	7	3	7	2	40.5
11	Stripers	2	9	4	3	5	9	2	3	37.0
12	Doug Outs	7	5	6	6	2	1	1	1	29.0

Many owners are likewise interested in the annual tabulation of "earnings," "profits," and losses. Each year the League Office, using a computer program developed and marketed by rotisserie guru Alex Patton, compiles a list of player "earnings" based upon a comparison of their accrued statistics to those of all other players given each team's salary limit of \$260. Thus a profit on a player is his earnings less his salary; a loss results when the salary exceeds the earnings. Sprinkled liberally throughout this newsletter you will find references to the amounts various players "earned" -- and in 1994 there were some extraordinary performances, to say the least. A note: The formulas used to calculate "earnings" are adjusted from year to year based on what occurs in the National League, and thus were adjusted for 1994 to reflect the strike-shortened season.

Below is a summary of each team's profits and losses. As with the Hypothetical League, the players used for this study were the original 23-player rosters -- those players on freeze lists and those bought in the auction. KEY: "Sal" is the total salary paid for players, "\$" is the total of the players' earnings, and "+/-" indicates the total profit or loss.

	--- Hitters ---			--- Pitchers ---			---- Total ----		
	\$	Sal	+/-	\$	Sal	+/-	\$	Sal	+/-
Monsters	187	163	24	129	96	33	316	259	57
Nowledge	231	158	73	81	100	-19	312	258	54
Quags	267	175	92	44	84	-40	311	259	52
Wrkg Crew	175	179	-4	106	80	26	281	259	22
Division	169	185	-16	100	64	36	269	249	20
Fever	200	171	29	74	88	-14	274	259	15
Sh Hoffs	205	202	3	53	58	-5	258	260	-2
U-Dawgs	144	165	-21	98	94	4	242	259	-17
Sol Train	116	148	-32	102	112	-10	218	260	-42
Stripers	160	162	-2	28	79	-51	188	241	-53
Peckers	161	157	4	41	102	-61	202	259	-61
Doug Outs	173	173	0	-11	84	-95	162	257	-95

Many observers speculated that the balance of power would begin to return to the pitchers in 1994, after the hitters had their way in semi-unprecedented fashion in the expansion year 1993. Instead, 1994, shortened though it was, was a year of historic proportions for offense. The overall NL batting average (including pitchers) was .267, the highest in 55 years. In the LTBNL, the overall batting average was .276. (Think of that in these terms: In order for a hitter to have helped the average rotisserie team in the BA category, he would had to have batted better than .276). More runs were scored per game (9.24) than in any year since 1953. Home runs hit per game (1.91) were the highest in 33 years. The NL ERA was 4.21, the highest since 1930, and the NL ratio was 1.386. In the LTBNL, the ERA was 4.11, and the ratio was 1.358, up from 3.92 and 1.329 in 1993 and 3.45 and 1.263 in 1992.

Of course, no one knew any of that when LTBNL owners assembled for the 1994 Auction/Draft at the lair of the Green Monsters on Saturday, April 2, a brilliant spring day. Upon arriving, participants found the place replete with hot coffee, cold beer, and sumptuous hors d'oeuvres (including those little Chinese dumpling things). All of this must have seemed dazzling to rookie owner Brad Underwood, who had been coerced into taking over the late Doctor's Dilemma franchise for the 1994 season. Just as the owners had completed a quick review of the rules, the phone rang with the annual call from the Patrick Division, and the auction was underway. (Many owners suspect that the Division, which almost always participates in the auction by conference call, is not actually a person, but is rather a synthesized, simulated voice, emanating from a secret Maryland laboratory, and is a joint creation of the Trilateral Commission, Elders of Zion, and Ed Kranepool Fan Club).

By virtue of their last place finish in 1993, the Sol Train was given the honor of throwing out the first name, and they opted for back-to-back NL MVP Barry Bonds. Surprisingly, Karnold Knowledge, which nearly always waits until the third round to buy their first player, snatched Bonds up for \$49, which amounted to a pay cut of some \$3 from Bonds' monster 1993 season. Bonds didn't disappoint, earning \$53. Things quickly went from the sublime to the ridiculous, however, when the Monsters then nominated Darryl Strawberry, and the rookie Underdaws bought him for \$19. Although no one knew it at the time, Darryl was at that moment AWOL from the Dodgers' camp and would eventually be suspended for a drug relapse, make a comeback with the Giants, then suffer another relapse and get sentenced to hard time for tax evasion. Unfortunately, the U-Daws compounded their first-round troubles by also purchasing Rob Dibble for \$17. Dibble's arm injury prevented him from throwing a single pitch in the majors in 1994, and his numbers on his rehab assignment were downright frightening. Also busy early in the draft were the Show Hoffs, who bought Mark Grace (\$31), John Kruk (\$19), and Tom Browning (\$6) in the first round, in an apparent effort to beat the traffic on the way home. The Show Hoffs were the first team to complete their squad.

The second round began when the U-Daws spent \$6 for Padres' catcher Brad Ausmus, of whom Bill James had said a few days earlier: "Here's a catcher who could steal 20 bases!" He stole only five, but had a decent year overall (.251-7-24-5, earned \$6). The biggest bust of the second round was Howard Johnson. Dan's Fever, imagining HoJo would launch around 40 homers playing in Mile High Stadium, ponied up \$27 for these stats: .211-10-40-11 (worth \$10). Bargains included the Sol Train's pickup of John Franco, the consensus comeback player of the

year, for \$17 (earned \$31), and Hector Carrasco, the spring training sensation on whom the QuagMyers spent \$6 (earned \$19).

Starting pitching, as always, went for a premium price in the auction. The Gregory Peckers spent \$35 on Jose Rijo with the third pick of the draft. Andy Benes went for \$21 (Stripers), Bob Tewksbury and Tom Candiotti for \$19 (Nowledge), John Smiley for \$20 (Nowledge again), Bret Saberhagen (Sol Train) for \$23 (a bargain, as it turned out; he earned \$46), and Doug Drabek, in Round 5, went for \$27 to the Underdaws. And jaws dropped when, noticing that by Round 5 virtually no quality starters were left, the Quags popped for \$19 to buy Erik Hanson (who wound up winning all of five games, earning \$7). Little known righty Paul Wagner of the Bucs was the subject of a surprise bidding war in Round 6, eventually going to the Doug Outs for \$15 (further evidence that many owners had watched the ESPN Pay-Per-View Rotisserie Special). Even Kirk Reuter cost \$21 (Sol Train).

Those teams in the hunt for a closer (or, as sports-talker Cris Collinsworth would say, a "closure") found some bargains. As mentioned, John Franco (\$17, 30 saves, 2.70 ERA, 1.32 ratio) and Hector Carrasco (\$6, 5 wins, 6 saves, 2.24 ERA, 1.28 ratio) had big years. The Wrecking Crew picked up Doug Jones in the third round for a mere \$12 and were handsomely rewarded (27 saves, 2.17, 1.13, earned \$35), as were the Sol Train with Jeff Brantley (\$7 in Round 4, 6 W, 15 S, 2.48, 1.13, earned \$31). Bruce "Two Minutes for" Ruffin went to the Underdaws for \$1 in Round 13, and finished the year as the Rockies' closer (16 saves, 4.04) -- although the U-Daws gave up on him in Week 4 before he'd picked up any saves, leaving him dangling on the waiver wire for the Doug Outs to snatch. (Interesting, considering it was the Doug Outs who suggested the U-Daws waive him in the first place). The annual search for Jim Leyland's closer left just about everyone frustrated: The Sol Train spent \$13 on Mark Dewey (1 save) in Round 7, while the U-Daws snatched Rick White (6 saves, unhittable early in the season) in Round 10 for \$2. (Sorry everyone, in 1995 it's Danny Miceli). The Peckers' pickup of Darren Dreifort (6 saves) in Round 10 for \$6 looked very good for a while, but Dreifort had arm trouble and faded (6.21 ERA, 2.07 ratio) and will miss 1995 due to surgery.

A tense moment late in the draft came when several owners noticed that there was one hitter still available who was projected to play every day -- and about whom everyone else seemed to have forgotten. Dave Staton, who had a huge year in 1993 in the Pacific Coast League, was supposed to start at first base for the lowly Padres. The QuagMyers, who needed only a catcher to fill out their roster, and the Doug Outs, who needed only pitchers (and who had earlier suckered the Quags into buying Dave Segui for \$12, thereby filling up their UT slot), nervously compared notes: the Quags somehow had projected Staton as the fourth best first baseman available in the draft, to hit 19 homers and drive in 60. Scrub after scrub was nominated, while Staton lurked in the background. Eventually it became a test of wills between Dan's Fever, Gregory Peckers, Karnold Nowledge, the Wrecking Crew, the Sol Train, and the Underdaws, all of whom needed to fill either a 1B, COR, or UT spot, and most of whom were wondering whether everyone else had forgotten about mighty young Staton. Finally the Train nominated him with the first pick of the 11th round. The Fever had the most money left and prevailed, at \$11, to the general dismay of almost everyone. And now, the rest of the story: Dave Staton sucked. He hit .182-4-6-0 (earned \$0) and was banished to the minors after only 66 at bats. The Peckers filled their remaining spots with journeymen Jerry (The

Governor) Browne and Chris Donnels, both of whom did decent jobs. (Donnels, who finished with 3 homers, led the Peckers in that category well into the season). The Sol Train filled their UT spot with Mike Maddux, the Nowledge settled for Mike Felder, and the U-Dawgs wound up with Craig Shipley (who earned \$16!) and Dave Gallagher. The real winner was the Crew, who, with the next-to-last pick of the whole draft, bought Greg Colbrunn for \$1. Colbrunn finished .303-6-31-1 and looks very much like the Marlins' starting first baseman for 1995.

The owners then took a short break -- just long enough to douse Dan's Fever with Yoo Hoo on account of its 1993 LTBNL pennant, light a cigar, and polish off the rest of those little Chinese things. Then it was on with the Ultra Reserve Draft. Hindsight being twenty/twenty, Round One was a bust. The Nowledge again struck first, by drafting Giant first base prospect J.R. Phillips, who made little noise on the major league front in 1994 (with the formidable Todd Benzinger blocking his path). The Candy Stripers drew rave reviews for their pick of Phillies' closer of the future Ricky Bottalico, whom Peter Gammons had already anointed to win Rookie of the Year, the Cy Young, and a Nobel prize. All Bottalico wound up doing, however, was inspiring heated argument about the pronunciation of his name (buh-TAL-ick-o, we think). The Doug Outs may have made the best pick by grabbing Ron Gant, a perennial 30/30 man who should be fully healed and be the Reds' leftfielder in 1995.

In retrospect, the key round of the Reserve Draft probably was Round 4. Therein, the Stripers nabbed Billy Ashley, a slugging outfielder in the Dodgers' chain who has inspired comparisons to Dave Kingman (.345-37-105-6, but 116 strikeouts in 388 at-bats at Albuquerque in 1994). The Stripers hope he doesn't turn out to be the second coming of Mike "The Big White Stiff" Marshall. With the next pick, the Peckers took Brian L. ("I'm not the fat one") Hunter, an Astros' outfielder who led all of the minors in BA (.372) and hits (191), and swiped 49 bases along the way. Three picks later, the Underdawgs took Quilvio Veras, an infielder with serious wheels, some pop, and a cool name (since traded to the Sol Train) -- probably the Marlins' starting 2B in '95. And with the ninth pick of the Fourth Round, the QuagMyers selected then-unknown Houston reliever John Hudek, who started the season in the minors but soon grabbed the Astros' closer role following the spectacular implosion and unconditional release of the Fever's beloved Mitch "Mild Thing" Williams. Hudek, now a Pecker, made the All-Star team, and finished with 16 saves in 18 chances, a 2.98 ERA and 1.07 ratio (earned \$20). Another nice pick in Round 4 was Cubs' hurler Jim Bullinger, by the Doug Outs (6 W, 2 Sv, 3.60, 1.21, earned \$16).

Suffice it to say that the early season belonged to Karnold Nowledge. The Nowledge, traditionally pitching-rich, held first place for eight consecutive weeks in April, May and June. In Week 2, they had an almost unbelievable total of 81 points, good for a 14-point lead over the second place Underdawgs. Their early lead was built on an historic year from Jeff Bagwell (more on him later) and solid work from the likes of Barry Bonds, Bret Boone, John Smiley, Jeff Fassero, and Pedro J. Martinez (when he wasn't inciting a bench-clearing brawl). But they couldn't hold it together. The demise of the Nowledge was best exemplified by the fate of junkballer Bob Tewksbury, in his contract drive with the frugal Cardinals. After picking up eight wins by May 24, Tewksbury went into a funk, and with him so did the Nowledge. Tewksbury finished with an uncharacteristically high 5.32 ERA (earned \$2), and the Nowledge, whose ERA in Week 5 was 3.72 (second place), finished with an ERA of 4.39, next to last. The bullpen was an equally

sad story, with Mike "The Reluctant Closer" Perez's 12 saves the only bright spot -- if a guy with an ERA of 8.71 and a ratio of 2.00 can be a bright spot. Also uncharacteristically, the Nowledge did not pull off a single trade during the season (perhaps because their perennial trading partner, Doctor's Dilemma, is no longer in the League) and ultimately may not yet have recovered from 1993's trade of Rod Beck to the Stripers. Although they did pull within 3.5 points of the lead as late as Week 18, the Nowledge finished a disappointing sixth, out of the money for the second straight year. With Bagwell and Martinez gone, the Nowledge face a rebuilding challenge if they're to be a factor in 1995. Will Bonds be back at \$49?

What could possibly be more alarming than a surging Pecker? That's the (rhetorical) question eleven owners were asking themselves when they realized that Gregory Peckers, who had been given up for dead in the early part of the season, were actually making a run at the LTBNL title. In Week 9 (the halfway point, as it turned out), the Peckers stood dead last, with only 29.5 total points, 39.5 points out of the lead, marking their eighth straight week in either 11th or 12th place. They were last in homers and ratio, next-to-last in RBI. Things looked bleak, but give team owner Greg May credit for deciding against calling in the dogs. Instead, he put on his Big Pecker T-shirt and picked up the phone. The dizzying spate of transactions that followed left the League Office's hard drive reeling. Ryne Sandberg and the diminutive Jerry Browne (the littlest Pecker) were dealt to the Patrick Division for Bobby Bonilla ("He'll never be on my team again," the head Pecker once said) and Kevin Stocker. (May expressed shock and regret when Sandberg announced his retirement only days later; he vehemently denied any suggestion that he had inside knowledge of Sandberg's intentions when the deal was announced. For his part, Sandberg said he was quitting to spend more time with his family. His wife waited almost two weeks before filing for divorce.) The Peckers waived ERA-killing pitcher Armando Reynoso one start before his season-ending arm injury; the Wrecking Crew claimed Reynoso and waived outfielder Mike Kingery (.188 in 16 AB), who was promptly claimed by the Peckers. For the rest of the year, Kingery hit .358 in 246 AB, with 38 RBI. A Week 11 free agent pick-up, Eddie Williams of the Padres, delivered as well (.331-11-42-0).

Encouraged and emboldened (we didn't say engorged) by their slow climb out the basement (ninth place by Week 12, sixth by Week 13) the Peckers continued their wheeling and dealing. On July 5, they shored up their bullpen by trading the beloved Andy Van Slyke and the exasperating Mark Wohlers to the Wrecking Crew for Rene Arocha and Mike Jackson. The following week, at the All-Star Break, the Peckers addressed their other shortcomings. They made four trades in one week with three different teams, involving eighteen different players, two of whom, before it was all over, had been traded again. When the dust cleared, the Peckers had Bret Saberhagen, John Hudek, Brett Butler, Raul Mondesi, Jose Offerman; gone were Jose Rijo, Mike Jackson, Carlos Garcia, Bobby Bonilla, Willie Greene, and Steve Cooke. Bill Swift and John Franco passed through the Peckers' clubhouse, but never unpacked their bags. Most effective was Saberhagen, who had 4 wins, a 1.67 ERA and 0.94 ratio in his 49 IP as a Pecker (and who alone lowered the Peckers' team ERA from 3.90 to 3.78). By Week 18, the surge peaked, as the Peckers pulled into fourth place with 62.5 points, a mere 2.5 points out of first. In the season's last three days, however, the Peckers hit only .248 and surrendered the BA lead to the Show Hoffs, had no homers and lost a half point to the Show Hoffs in that category,

and were tied in Wins by the Fever, and passed by the Underdaws (who got one win each from Zane Smith, Dave Burba, and the immortal William Vanlandingham). The Peckers' players apparently thought the strike was supposed to start August 9. The net loss of two points allowed the Wrecking Crew to sneak under the wire for fourth place. Thus was fulfilled a prophecy made in January 1994, when the Crew advised the League Office, in writing, that they "boldly predict[ed] that the Wrecking Crew will finish in the money."

The Wrecking Crew assumed the struggling Brock's Bombers franchise in 1993, and clearly have now turned the corner of respectability. The lamented Bombers finished ninth in 1992, but thanks to their hands-on tag-team ownership style, the Wrecking Crew regime fashioned a sixth place finish last year, and climbed to fourth this season. Although they started slowly, the Crew were in the hunt most of the year, holding first place briefly (in Week 12), and rarely falling more than six or so points off the lead. Their in-the-money finish was even more astounding when these three factors are considered: (1) the aforementioned premature waiving of Mike Kingery; (2) the bizarre freeze of Barry Larkin as the astronomical price of \$42 (he probably could have been re-purchased in the auction for around \$30); and (3) the absence of the entertaining but effective tag-team format at this year's auction (although it is surmised that the Crew ownership was in secret telephone contact at times during the draft: "Hey, let's buy Ozzie Canseco again!"). Highlights during the draft were the aforementioned \$12 purchase of Doug Jones, Marvin Freeman (10 W, 2.80, 1.21 -- in very thin air) for \$1, and Kevin Mitchell (.326, 30, 77 in 310 AB (more or less a full season for Big K, strike or no strike)) for \$28.

The Crew traditionally have had good pitching and speed, but so-so power numbers. This was again the case this season, with the Crew languishing around seventh or eighth place in homers and RBI most of the year. Two trades in Week 13 clearly were meant to address these shortcomings, as they acquired Dave Justice from the Doug Outs and Andy Van Slyke from the Peckers, the net cost being the enigmatic (and egomaniacal) Chuck Carr and two relievers. To some extent the strategy worked: the Crew moved up two places in both HR and RBI, while maintaining their first-place standing in saves. Ultimately, though, the shortness of the season worked against them, as a few bad pitching weeks dropped the Crew from second to sixth in ERA and from second to fourth in ratio (thanks to Omar Olivares (1 win, 7.49 ERA, 1.81 ratio over the last five weeks) and John Smoltz (no wins, 6.00 ERA, 1.53 ratio over same period). For his part, Van Slyke just continued to be lousy (.241, 0 HR, 9 RBI in 116 AB for the Crew). The Wrecking Crew face a rebuilding project for next year. They have eight "X" or "F" players, more than any other team.

Traditionally in this space we poke fun at the Candy Stripers for some sort of perceived managerial lapse -- and this year is no exception. Last season, you may recall, we quipped that the Stripers almost became the first team ever to try to win a Rotisserie crown without an infield. They had spent so much of their draft day budget on pitching and Barry Bonds that they could afford only scrub infielders. Halfway through the season, while leading the LTBNL in batting average, they noticed that they were not nearly on pace to have enough at-bats to qualify for the crown in that category. By the time they'd remedied that situation through trades, they'd sabotaged their batting average beyond repair. This season, we note with some amusement the Stripers'

failure to spend their full allotment of money during the draft, despite other owners' constant encouragement to use it or lose it. The Stripers took Larry Walker at \$36 and Andy Benes at \$21 with the last two picks of the first round, then Matt Williams at \$39 with the last pick of the second. According to the official LTBNL records, that left them with \$76, but they must have left the room or lapsed into an hors d'oeuvre-induced coma, because they weren't heard from again until they bought Rey Sanchez for \$3 late in the sixth round. They spent \$1 in Round 7 for Charlie Hough (apparently figuring they'd best conserve some money for his medical care) and entered the eighth round with \$72 to spend -- and very little left to spend it on. Suddenly, all hell broke loose, as the Stripers bought five of the next six players: Luis Alicea for \$16 (!), Scott Servais for \$7, Pat Rapp for \$7, Randy Tomlin for \$8, and then somehow they were forced to spend \$14 to acquire Eddie Zambrano. Even so, their final payroll was only \$241, meaning they failed to spend \$19 of their budget. Memo to the Stripers for next year's draft: It's not real money!

Regular readers of the LTBNL Season Wrap-Up Newsletter will recall that each year the League Office presents the "Darren Daulton Separation Anxiety Award." The award has nothing to do with Mr. Daulton's marital difficulties with that Hooters spokesbabe. Rather, it was originally given to the Candy Stripers in 1992, when the Stripers, who owned Daulton that season, traded him to the Doug Outs in an alcohol-soaked multi-player swap, only to regret the trade forevermore. (Even today, the Stripers' owner sometimes displays an unflattering facial tic when the Phillies' catcher's name is mentioned.) The Stripers had their revenge on the Doug Outs the following season, when they acquired Sammy Sosa for Tommy Greene; Sosa suddenly became a 30/30 player, while Greene imitated a human batting tee for the next several months. And no LTBNL newsletter would be complete without mentioning the most lopsided trade in LTBNL history, the LTBNL's version of Frank Robinson for Milt Pappas: the 1992 heist of Curt Schilling from the Quags by the Doug Outs for Dick Schofield. This season, the League Office is tempted to present "The Darren" to the QuagMyers, in anticipation of the pain they expect to feel when Raul Mondesi, traded to the Peckers last July in a desperate attempt to slap together some semblance of a starting staff, resumes his assault on National League pitching.

But instead, and with some reservations, the nod again goes to the beleaguered Doug Outs, this time for the May 17 trade of Willie Banks to the Sol Train for Mike Maddux. Don't get us wrong: Willie Banks is not really a very good pitcher (8-12, 5.40, 1.41, 0-6 in his last 8 starts, earned minus \$4). But for a while, he caused the Doug Outs severe separation anxiety. Until he blew up in early July, Banks turned in one good start after another for the Sol Train: in his first 55 innings with the Train, he won 5 games, with a 2.60 ERA and 0.976 Ratio. In exasperation, the Doug Outs phoned the League Office, threatening to quit the league, or worse, unless Banks went in the tank immediately. Banks responded by surrendering seven runs and fifteen baserunners in his next start, and did not win again in 1994. Still, it was a frustrating year for the Doug Outs, who finished an uncharacteristically low eleventh. You know it's a rebuilding year, noted the Doug Outs on several occasions, when the highlight of your season is claiming Bruce Ruffin on waivers.

This year's third place finisher, the Green Monsters, seem to have a strong team every season. In fact, we here at the League Office are kind of sick of writing this year after year. Since they were added to

the LTBNL as an expansion franchise in 1990, the mighty Monsters have finished in the money every year, including a pennant in 1992, and second place finishes in 1990, 1991 and 1993. (If it weren't for that darned '92 championship, we could call them the Buffalo Bills of the LTBNL). They were in the hunt all year in 1994, falling no lower than third place in any week after Week 3, and holding first place three different weeks. It was a low-maintenance year for the Monsters, who spent much of the early summer tied up in trial in Philadelphia. Aside from the aforementioned pre-season swap of relievers with the QuagMyers, the Monsters made few major adjustments to their squad, twice going four consecutive weeks without any transactions, and using only 28 different players on their active roster. The Monsters' pitching was so strong this season (37.5 pitching points, best in the league) that they were able to keep two of the worst pitchers in all of Rotisserie, Ben Rivera and Greg W. Harris, on reserve most of the year, thereby depriving the League Office of prime newsletter material.

And speaking of sustained excellence from year to year, once again we salute Dan's Fever, who again captured the LTBNL pennant, blah blah blah. As mentioned, for Dan's Fever, it was the third championship in the six-year history of the LTBNL. The Fever once again managed to assemble a strong squad on draft day (all the more notable given that the Fever were, for much of the festivities, banished to the back porch due to the dual dangers of second-hand cigar smoke and second-hand Yoo Hoo). The Fever survived their annual midseason mega-trade with the archrival QuagMyers, this year swapping Steve Avery, Reggie Sanders (both "F" players), and Kim Batiste for Shawon Dunston, David Segui, and James Mouton. Although the trade initially raised some eyebrows around the League (several owners called to congratulate the Quags for an apparent heist), little real damage was done. Avery was horrible after the trade; Dunston and Sanders were competent but basically a wash, and all the other players were mere warm bodies. (Kim Batiste, however, did manage to draw one walk -- his ninth in four years in the majors!) We should probably also mention the accomplishments of Fever pitcher Greg Maddux, who put together the best rotisserie season ever by a starting pitcher -- more on this later.

But most amazing is that the Fever survived the spectacular demise of their immortal beloved, Astros' "closer" Mitch Williams. For those who need to be reminded, the Fever have owned Williams, often at a ridiculously inflated price, every year of the LTBNL's existence. The Fever's loyalty was rewarded in 1993, when Mitch put together a magnificent season (43 saves, 3.34 ERA, but a 1.61 ratio) for the Phillies. But when he more or less singlehandedly handed the Blue Jays the World Series that year, it appeared that he'd lost something off his fastball, and Jim Fregosi (to say nothing of Curt "Towel-head" Schilling) could take no more. Mitch was shipped to Houston for soft-thrower Doug Jones. Despite his spectacular wildness and rather pedestrian cheese, Mitch demanded to be the Astros' one-and-only closer, and Terry Collins showed much less patience than Fregosi. When Mitch was released unconditionally in May, he had an ERA of 7.65, with 24 walks in only 20 IP (good for a 2.25 ratio). Although Williams signed with California over the winter, the Fever have served notice that they intend nevertheless to draft his rights in 1995. The Fever do have a decent closer in Marlins' flamethrower Robb Nen (15 saves in 15 chances, 2.95 ERA, 1.09 ratio, allowed only 1 of 28 inherited runners to score, earned \$27), a ninth round reserve list pick who developed nicely after Mitch's ruin. But if they're looking for

Williams' heir apparent, they should dump Nen, who, after all, has great control and walked fewer batters all year than Mitch usually does in a three-game series. Memo to the Fever: Check out 6'5" lefty Robbie Beckett, a Padres' farmhand who throws 90-plus and walked 79 batters in 64 innings last year.

And now (is anyone actually still reading?), we proceed with the rest of our annual postseason awards, observations, and oddities. If we didn't mention your team in an extended comment in the section above, we do regret it. Next year please try to do something noteworthy or amusing.

Rotisserie MVP (hitter): Jeff Bagwell, Karnold Knowledge. It wasn't even close. Bagwell (.368-39-116-15, in only 110 games!) earned \$63, \$10 more than runner-up Barry Bonds. Not only that, but his slugging average was an amazing .750, second only in NL history to Rogers Hornsby's .756 in 1925. Everyone knows that the Astros got Bagwell from the Red Sox in a trade for the immortal Larry Andersen, but does anyone remember how the Knowledge got hold of him? Surprise! It was in a trade with the late Doctor's Dilemma (Brian R. "I'm the Fat One" Hunter and Lee Smith for Bagwell and Pedro J. Martinez (the Expo) on 5/18/93). There really ought to be an investigation. Thankfully, Bagwell goes back into the draft the next time we have one.

Rotisserie Cy Young: No surprise here. Greg Maddux, Dan's Fever, had one of the greatest seasons ever by a starting pitcher. He earned, brace yourself, \$73. Maddux led the NL in wins (16), ERA (1.56), ratio (0.896), complete games (10), innings pitched (202), shutouts (3), and opponents' batting average (.207), et cetera, et cetera. Perhaps most impressive, his ERA was more than two-and-a-half runs better than the league ERA, the biggest differential in history, according to STATS, Inc. By that measure, Maddux in 1994 was even more dominant than Bob Gibson in 1968 (1.12 ERA). Wow. Bret Saberhagen of the Mets, Train, and Peckers was also awesome, earning \$46. Sabes finished with more victories (14) than walks (13), the first time that's happened since 1919. His 11/1 K/BB ratio was the best of the modern era. The best reliever was John Wetteland of the Expos and Monsters, who earned \$37.

Worst Rotisserie Hitter: Jeff Reed, the Giants' and Crew's backup backstop, hit .175 with one homer in 103 ABs, earning minus \$3. Runner-up: Dodgers shortstop Jose Offerman, one year removed from a .269-1-62-30 season, hit .210 with only 2 steals, earning minus \$1, and was banished to the minors in favor of someone named Rafael Bournigal. (Offerman hit .330 at AAA after his demotion, but you can bet the Doug Outs won't pay \$21 for him again anytime soon.)

Worst Rotisserie Pitcher: Greg W. Harris of the Rockies and Monsters posted a 6.65 ERA and 1.58 ratio in 130 innings, earning minus \$25. Mike Morgan of the Cubs and the U-Dawgs was nearly as bad, with a 6.69 and ratio of 1.81 in 80 IP (earned minus \$23).

Biggest profits on players bought in the auction: The biggest bargains of the auction turned out to be Jeff Brantley of the Reds and Sol Train (15 saves, 2.48, 1.13, \$7 salary, earned \$31) and Marvin Freeman of the Rockies and Crew (10 wins, 2.80, 1.21, \$1 salary, earned \$25) both of whom earned profits of \$24. Freeman, also the top \$1 player, was one of the last purchases of the auction. The Show Hoffs paid only \$9 for the biggest bargain hitter, the Dodgers' Tim Wallach, who earned \$25 with a .280-23-78-0 performance, for a profit of \$16.

Biggest auction busts: Ryne Sandberg, whom the Peckers drafted for \$35, earned only \$3 before retiring, a loss of \$32. The Sol Train paid \$20 for the once-great Doc Gooden, who earned minus \$5, a loss of \$25.

Best freezes: Ho hum. Jeff Bagwell, frozen by the Nowledge at \$21, earned \$63 (\$42 profit). Greg Maddux, frozen by the Fever at \$33, earned \$72 (\$39 profit).

Worst freezes: The aforementioned Mike Morgan was the biggest bust pitcher (frozen at \$15, earned minus \$23, loss of \$38). A pair of disappointing Show Hoffs tied for worst freeze among hitters: Lenny Dykstra (frozen at \$32, earned \$14) and Robby Thompson (frozen at \$18, earned \$0) both were \$18 losses.

Highest earnings by reserve list picks: 1. Robb Nen, Fever, earned \$27; 2. Shane Reynolds, Quags, earned \$22. 3. Mike Kingery, picked by the Crew, earned \$21.

Best month by a hitter not named Bagwell: A subjective choice, probably, but Ellis Burks of the Rockies and U-Dawgs hit .413 in April with 9 HR and 17 RBI.

Best month by a pitcher not named Maddux: Chris Hammond of the Marlins and Patrick Division went 3-0 with a 0.61 ERA and 1.011 ratio in May.

Best FAAB acquisitions: The Sol Train picked up Expos' lefty Butch Henry in Week 6 for \$10, and Henry turned out to be the top FAAB acquisition of the year, going 8-3, with a 2.43 ERA, 1.090 ratio, and one save, earning \$29. The Wrecking Crew spent \$17 in Week 8 for Padres' rookie righty Joey Hamilton (9-6, 2.98, 1.169), who earned \$24. Fellow Padre Andy Ashby, maligned on numerous occasions in this newsletter in previous years, finally put it together in 1994, despite terrible run support; he finished with a 3.40 ERA, but the Padres scored only 3.45 runs per game for him, lowest among all pitchers with at least 20 starts. He earned \$23 (6-11, 3.40, 1.144). The Doug Outs picked him up in Week 8 for \$10. If Andy Benes stays, the Padres have the makings of a nice starting staff. Other good FAAB pickups: Eddie Williams, Peckers (earned \$17); Josias Manzanillo, Fever (\$15); Jeremy Hernandez, Sol Train (\$13).

Best waiver claims: Mike Kingery, claimed in Week 7 by the Peckers, earned \$21. Bruce Ruffin, claimed by the Doug Outs in Week 4, earned \$15.

Best player nobody ever owned: Rich Monteleone, Giants' journeyman reliever, earned \$9 (4-3, 3.18, 1.235), to the general disdain of LTBNL GMs. At last check, Monteleone, the Giants' player rep, had been released and is a free agent.

Most players used: The Peckers used a total of 46 different players on their active roster this year, tying the record they set last year. By contrast, the Division used only 25, the Show Hoffs only 27, and the Monsters only 28.

Most profligate spender: The QuagMyers led the way for the second year in a row, spending \$113.10 to ensure their second-place finish. They would likely have broken their own record of \$124.20 but for the strike.

Quote of the year: Aptly named Mets minor leaguer and Peckers' reserve player Butch Huskey, who reported to 1994 spring training at 264 pounds, more than 20 pounds over the limit set by the Mets, incurred the wrath of manager Dallas Green, and was promptly demoted to the minor league camp. Said Huskey: "You can't miss meals. I'm not a big breakfast man, but you have to eat breakfast, because it gets you to noon." He hit only .228 with 10 homers at AAA Norfolk, but still might make the Mets in 1995.

T-shirt of the year: Show Hoffs' 1B John Kruk, now a free agent, missed the early part of the 1994 season due to, um, surgery related to his testicular cancer. While working out at Veterans' Stadium prior to his triumphant return (he doubled in his first at-bat), Kruk was spotted wearing a T-shirt that read: "Put me in coach ... Or I'll take my ball and go home."

Silliest thing said by Skip Caray all year: When Cardinals' manager Joe Torre summoned rookie reliever John Frascatore in a mid-summer Braves-Cardinals game, Skip noted "That sounds like a dugout request from a thirsty Cardinal on a hot night: 'Hey, hand me a Frascatore.'" Get it?

All that remains is to recap the 1994 year from a financial standpoint. Attached is the more-or-less final report, which details how much each team spent and how much is still owed the League treasury. Accounts receivable stands at more than \$700. Obviously, given the disgust each of us now feels toward baseball in general, this is a pretty crappy time to hit you up for money. On the other hand, it's only right, strike or no strike, that we should pay off 1994's winners. So if you owe, please send a check. As always, if you think we have the amount you owe wrong, contact the League Office.

A few notes: The stats assessment was raised to \$25.00 from \$20.00 to cover the cost of the new software (which was \$60). I think everyone will agree that it money well spent; "Spin Stats" was a marked improvement over its antiquated predecessor, "Stats Master," and should continue to serve us well in 1995, assuming there's a season. Gross receipts are expected to be \$1,048.80, down only slightly from last season's record of \$1,071.90, despite the shortened season. Expenses are expected to be in the neighborhood of \$185.00. Aside from the software, other expenses were for on-line charges, postage, computer paper, envelopes, labels, floppies, etc. (The League Office is currently exploring new, and perhaps less expensive, sources for obtaining its stats on-line. If you have any suggestions, please speak up.) In any event, assuming everyone pays up, after expenses we expect to have the following payouts: About \$432 (50%) for the Fever, \$216 (25%) for the Quags, \$130 (15%) for the Monsters, and \$86 (10%) for the Crew. Not too bad, considering all the Fehr and loathing.

That's it. Apologies from the League Office for taking all winter to get this Newsletter to you, and for making it look like a Russian novel when it did arrive. Perhaps this will whet your appetite for rotisserie or lessen your disgust, or at least encourage you to take Newt's suggestion and pop "Field of Dreams" in the VCR. With any luck, we'll have a settlement soon, and you'll get a prompt update from the League Office advising of the time and place for the 1995 auction and for submission of freeze lists. Play ball, already!