

Cardinals' stats leave room for optimism

*I hate myself for loving you
Can't break free from the things that you do
I wanna walk but I run back to you
That's why I hate myself for loving you* — Joan Jett and the Blackhearts

There it is. I think this little ditty from my misspent youth encapsulates the entirety of Cardinal nation right now.

For the better part of the last 25 years, the St. Louis Cardinals have epitomized consistency. They've made the playoffs in all but seven of those seasons, playing in four world series and winning two. And now, seemingly out of nowhere, they're at the back of the pack, with the third worst record in the National league,

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



sitting at the bottom of the Central standings.

This is very new and unusual for fans under the age of 40, since the redbirds haven't finished last in their division in 33 years. Yet here we are as a fan base, still spinning the turnstiles and buying the \$70 jerseys and \$11 dollar beers and \$8 hot dogs. Faithful to the

boys with the birds on the bats through thick and thin.

*I'm hard to love, hard to love, oh, I don't make it easy
And I couldn't do it if I stood where you stood* — Lee Brice

It's not just that the Cards are losing, it's the seemingly endless different ways that they're doing so. One night, their pitching shines but they

can't hit a lick. The next night, they hit OK, but their starter stinks. The night after, their starter is decent and they score some runs, but the bullpen blows the lead. There have been some errors that have cost games, and now we can add boneheaded base running mistakes to the list of ways they've found to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Mark Twain once said that there were "lies, damned lies and statistics," but the stats really do kind of tell the tale of woe and misery. In 2022, the Cardinals were 4th in defensive runs saved, according to fieldingbible.com (which is a really cool website for stats wonks like me!). This season, they've slid to 25th. In 2022,

the Cardinals finished 10th in batting, per ESPN.COM. This year, they've slid back four places to 14th, which wouldn't be so bad if their pitching hadn't regressed as well. Last season, they were 10th, and this season, they're 17th.

So what does it all mean? We're hitting worse, fielding worse, pitching worse and running the bases worse than last year. So it means we've earned our last place standing, to a certain extent. Of course, luck plays a role as well. According to fangraphs.com, (another stat nerd nirvana) their base runs number, which uses runs scored versus runs allowed to project wins and losses, has the Cardinals sitting in 3rd place rather than

last. In other words, they've underplayed, and their opponents have overplayed the numbers.

For a diehard fan, this gives a glimmer of hope. Statistics usually regress toward the mean, so if we can find some pitching help, tighten up the defense a bit, and continue to put the ball in play, we could still do a little damage. My only hope at this juncture is that we win 37 more games, at the least.

The Cardinals have never lost 100 games in a season, and I don't want this to be the first time. And if we could finish ahead of that team in blue who resides in that tiny stadium at the corner of Addison and Waverly, that'd be great.

IFB President: Farmers prepare for another busy summer

By RICHARD GUEBERT JR.
Illinois Farm Bureau President

Illinois farmers have wrapped up planting the #1 and #2 crops Illinois is known for, soybean and corn. While farmers' markets and u-pick operations pick up their production, corn and soybean farmers wait for timely rains to grow the crops.

For Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB), summer is an extremely busy time for farmers, university researchers and members of the community who engage one another through our many educational events.

Americans are more curious than ever about where and how their food is grown. They want to know whether the meat, fruits, vegetables and other food products are

sustainably grown, and about farmers' efforts to preserve and care for the land.

We are proud to work with those family farmers, and the fact that 96% of farms in Illinois are family owned.

That's why IFB and its partners continue to invite our friends and neighbors to events, such as our upcoming summer Nutrient Stewardship Field Days. These state events, funded through IFB's Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program, demonstrate ongoing research and agricultural conservation practices. They are opportunities for farmers to network with agribusinesses and university researchers, and for consumers to learn more about agriculture's role in the environment.

As weather heats up, you might notice more insects buzzing around. Butterflies, honeybees and even wasps play an important role in our environment, pollinating the many fruits and vegetables farmers grow. June 19 marks the start of National Pollinator Week when we celebrate pollinators and find new ways to protect them.

This year, Cook County Farm Bureau (CFB) and IFB are partnering with Lincoln Park Zoo on June 23 for a fun-filled day of pollinator education. Zoo attendees will have the chance to interact and meet with Cook County farmers, master gardeners and other agricultural representatives while learning more about farmers' efforts

to protect pollinators.

In addition to putting a focus on sustainability and pollinators, IFB partners with many organizations to find solutions to address hunger and nutrition.

Illinois dairy farmers and Illinois Milk Producers Association recently donated 9,936 pounds of milk, including lactose-free, to two local food banks to help communities experiencing food insecurity. The donation is in partnership with Prairie Farms, Illinois Corn Growers Association and Illinois Soybean Association.

We know that more families are struggling with higher sticker prices at the grocery store. While farmers are price takers and not price makers, we can and should

help our communities struggling during these challenging times.

Creative solutions such as the Farm to Food Bank Initiative seek to connect farmers, food banks, and our most vulnerable communities with fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, milk, eggs and other food products while cutting food waste.

IFB partnered with Feeding Illinois, Illinois Farmers Market Association, Illinois Specialty Growers Association, University of Illinois Extension and the Prairie Research Institute's Illinois Sustainable Technology Center on the Farm to Food Bank pilot program, which officially launched in 2021.

We are pleased to see that

program has paved a path to trim food waste and build food bank inventories with fresh, healthy food directly from farmers, and a new bill establishing the official program within the Department of Human Services awaits Gov. JB Pritzker's signature.

Summer is an exciting and busy time of year for many people, not just for farmers. I encourage and invite you all to join us during one of our many educational events and learn more about Illinois agriculture.

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.

PUZZLES

CLUES ACROSS

1. In a place to sleep
5. Chemical compound (abbr.)
8. A way to fish
11. Classic Linklater film "___ and Confused"
13. Legume
14. Indonesian island
15. Smooth, creamy substance
16. Arctic
17. Wood sorrels
18. Defied
20. Cattle
21. Tableland
22. Honorably retired and retaining one's title
25. Repossession
30. Danced
31. Adult males
32. A type of section
33. Type of Japanese animation
38. Satisfaction

41. Fit
43. "Ain't No Sunshine" singer
45. Failure
47. Israeli city
49. French river
50. Cavalry-sword
55. Nocturnal S. American rodent
56. Liquefied natural gas
57. Afflicted
59. Electronic counter-countermeasures
60. Popular HBO fantasy series (abbr.)
61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
62. Large body of water
63. ___kosh, near Lake Winnebago
64. Impudence

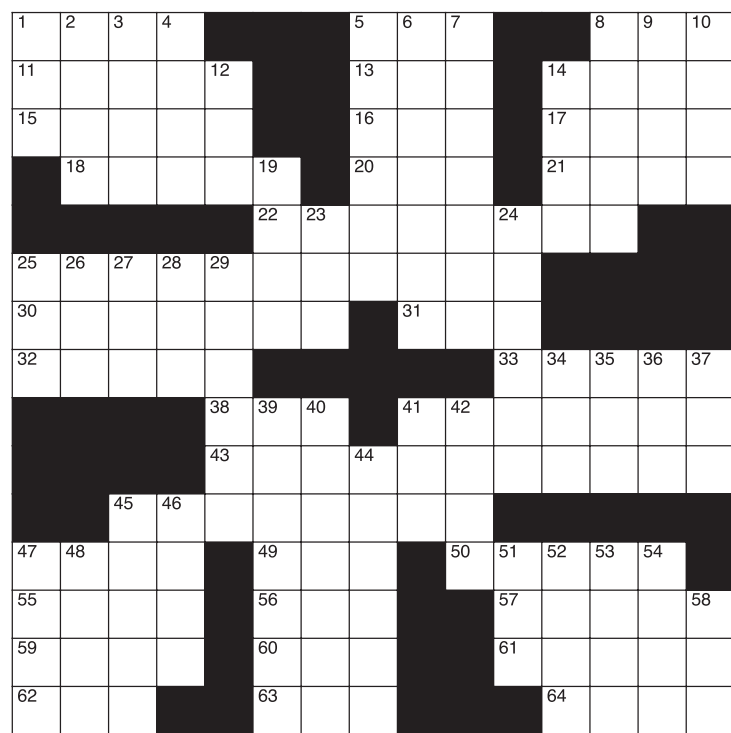
CLUES DOWN

1. Payroll firm

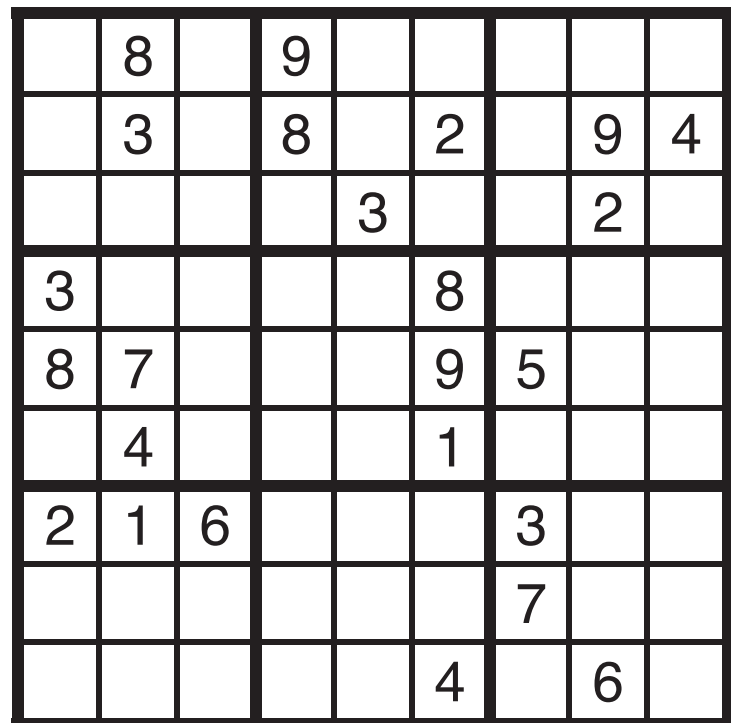
2. Unit of transmission
3. Rockers Better Than ___
4. Bambi is one
5. Highest parts of something
6. Correct behavior
7. Batty
8. Cyprinid fishes
9. Expression of sorrow or pity
10. Site of the famous Leaning Tower
12. American rocker Snider
14. W. African language
19. Symbol to mark for removal
23. ___ Squad
24. Resident
25. Federal savings bank
26. Paddle
27. Returned material authorization (abbr.)
28. One point south

- of due east
29. Winter melon
34. Last or greatest in an indefinitely large series
35. Anger
36. Central European river
37. First responders
39. Spanish noble
40. Persons with absence of skin pigment
41. Defunct airline
42. Small island (British)
44. The extent of something from beginning to end
45. Capital of Bangladesh
46. Dutch cheese
47. Imitates
48. A contest of speed
51. Swiss river
52. Prejudice
53. Actor Idris
54. UNLV's are Runnin'
58. Criticize

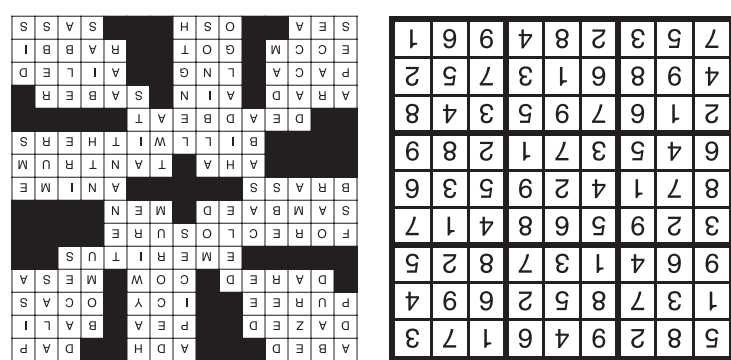
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SOLUTIONS



Weekly Horoscopes

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, despite your best efforts, you cannot seem to get much work done this week. Your head is in the clouds with matters of the heart. Soon enough your focus will return.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

This week you may tire from charging into battle and prefer others to do the fighting for you, mighty Taurus. You can use a rest from always putting yourself out there.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Adopt a more serious tone this week, Gemini. Your actions may be judged without your knowledge, so lay low. Put the most professional foot forward.

CANCER - June 22/July 22

People may respond much better to comforting words and gestures this week, Cancer. Carefully construct your approach to communicating to reach the widest audience.

LEO - July 23/Aug 23

You may soon discover that a person who you consider a friend really is your perfect match, Leo. When you look at this person, the realization may suddenly dawn on you.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, others around you are especially sensitive this week, so even the slightest criticism could be mistaken for an insult. Rather than ruffle feathers, hold your tongue.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

These next few days you could present an opportunity to break free from everyday life and the mundane, Libra. If you don't know how to proceed, follow your gut.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

You don't always need to be in pursuit of some sort of intellectual betterment, Scorpio. Get outside and take a walk or swim in a lake. Engage in trivial things that bring you joy.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, you are capable of producing impressive results if you set your mind on a plan. This is the week to dabble in a new hobby that will bring forth your creativity.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Some debates may not come to a swift resolution, Capricorn. You may need to accept that you simply disagree with someone on a particular topic and let things lie.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, you may have been a little worried about your work or studies lately. This week things will lighten up and you'll feel much more in control of your situation.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

This is likely to be a busy week filled with the potential for travel. Bring along a close friend or a loved one for the adventure.



FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

- JUNE 11
Claire Holt, Actress (35)
- JUNE 12
Adriana Lima, Model (42)
- JUNE 13
Chris Evans, Actor (42)
- JUNE 14
Boy George, Singer (62)
- JUNE 15
Courtney Cox, Actress (59)
- JUNE 16
Jonah Marais, Singer (25)
- JUNE 17
KJ Apa, Actor (26)