

The Baseball Magazine For People Who Hate Baseball Magazines

*Spring  
2004*

# Z I S K

# 8



## **IS THIS TRADE GOOD FOR BASEBALL? THE ZISK STAFF WEIGHS IN ON THE A-ROD DEAL**

*The Hack Man: Jeffery Leonard*

*Peter Gammons: Hot Stove Cool Music*

*The Last Days at Fulton County Stadium*

*Roger Clemens: The Rocket Ruins a Friendship*

*...and more!*



# Z I S K

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*And now a word from our editor's mom, Mary Faloon, regarding some of the language used in Zisk #7...*

The other morning, a work morning ever so early, I was eating my usual work day breakfast—a mix of Cheerios and Honey Nut Cheerios with soy milk. And as usual I wanted something to read with my meal. Ahaa, a good time to take a look at *Zisk*, a magazine put out by my oldest son. Hey, here's an article about people I know—two of my sons and their uncle (referring to “The Year in Baseball: 2003 – As Seen by the Faloon Family”). Great!!

Well, I started reading the article and then I started chocking on those little o's trying to make their way to my stomach. I came across these words that were absolutely horrible, words I'm not sure what they meant. And to think they were used by my own fresh and blood, babes out of my womb. I was just appalled to think that my sons who I have never heard say anything naughty were using such awful, awful language. Needless to say no way could I finish my breakfast of champions. Then I thought it had to be someone else using the Faloon name. Hopefully I'm right.

Sincerely,  
Mary Faloon

*Neither my brother nor my uncle could be reached for comment, but, Mom, I know Casey (my brother) warned you about the last issue and that you opted to ignore him. For the love of god do not read the last article in this issue.*

—Mike Faloon

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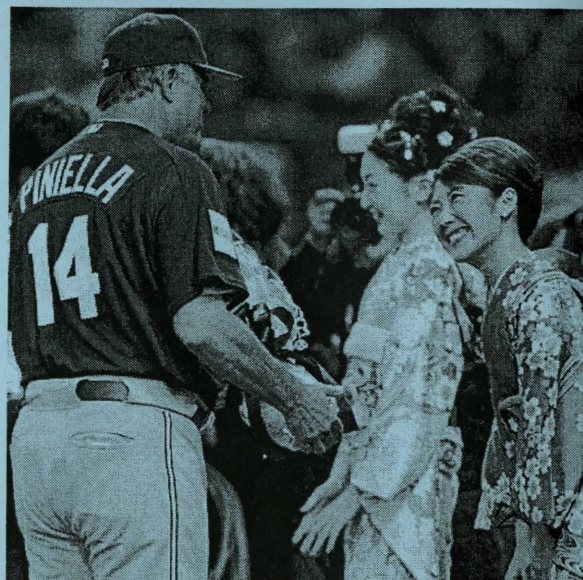
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# Numbers Freak

by **Len Vlahos**

"My name is **Len Vlahos**, and I have an addiction to numbers."

It's true, I am a numbers freak. Who else can tell you how many loads of laundry he's likely to do if he lives out his statistical life expectancy (2,140); which letter of the alphabet most often begins the last name of U.S. Presidents (H, five times); and of course, how many days, hours, and minutes to opening day (26 hours, 14 days, and 8 minutes as I write this)?

Obsessive compulsive? Yes. Cursed? A bit. But there's a lot fun in this world for a numbers freak. In my case, Texas Hold 'Em Poker, handicapping horse races, and the granddaddy of all number-driven pursuits, fantasy baseball.

The league I play in (and also run as commissioner) is not your standard 5x5 league. In fact, we're a 14x13 league. For real. Here are the stats we use:

Batting—R, 1B, 2B, 3B, HR, RBI, SB, CS, BB, K, E, AVG, OBP, SLG  
Pitching—GS, W, L, CG, SHO, SV, ER, HR, BB, K, HLD, ERA, WHIP

Using this many categories is not without its problems: Should Caught Stealing be weighted the same as Home Runs? Is it too easy for a manager to sit his pitchers late in the season in order to keep negative categories (Losses, Earned Runs, Walks) artificially low? (This happened in our league last year, which is why, this year, we're tracking Games Started.)

But even with its imperfections, it's the perfect league for a numbers freak. After my disappointing fifth place finish (out of 12) last year, I resolved to play smarter, play better, and win. And as any fantasy baseballer knows, it all begins with the draft.

I started working on my draft plan the (glorious) day after the (wonderful) Florida Marlins beat the (hated) New York Yankees in the World Series. The first question I needed to answer was, "What does it take to win?" We use a rotisserie scoring system, ranking each team in each of the 29 categories (we had two extra categories last year) from best to worst, with 12 points going to the best and 1 to the worst. So, last year, a perfect score would have been 348 (12 points in each of the 29 categories).

The actual winner, a rascal named **Eric** (who won for the second straight year), had a final score of 233.5.

A little massaging of the numbers, and you quickly learn that averaging eight points (or 5th place) in each of the 29 categories is just about good enough to win. (That actually totals 232 points, but let's not split hairs. And by the way, the average human head of a 30-year-old has about 300 follicles per square centimeter. You starting to get the numbers freak thing?)

So all I need to do is construct a balanced team that will average eight points per category. Ha! Easier said than done. But fear not, I have the numbers on my side.

Four months and 153 Excel worksheets later—yes, 153 Excel worksheets!—I'm starting to finally get my head around this. And if nothing else, I've learned a few valuable tidbits along the way:

- ♦ **Soriano** is a sucker bet in the first round.
- ♦ **A-Rod** is a bad pick in the top 3. (If you're in a league with a lot of categories, it's **Pujols, Helton, Beltran**.)
- ♦ The Dodgers would be well served to get **Wilson Alvarez** into the back-end of their rotation.
- ♦ Look for breakout years from **Melvin Mora, Trot Nixon, and Placido Polanco**.
- ♦ Steroid rumors and a new ballpark notwithstanding, **Gary Sheffield** is a freaking stud.

But my data only applies to our crazy 14x13 league. In a 5x5 league, it's completely different. One manager's tonic is another's poison. And that's the most valuable thing I've learned—something **Bill James** learned and preached long ago—it's really all about the data, and how that data applies to the situation at hand.

Don't go into your fantasy draft unprepared. If you do your homework, you can build a good team, even one without a lot of stars. If you go in with little or no preparation, you'll get what you deserve.

I fully expect my fellow managers to snicker at many of my picks on draft day, but that's okay. The numbers will be on my side.

I hope you've enjoyed reading all 776 words in this article.



# The Hack Man

by Ken Derr

"What becomes a legend most?" the song goes, and when it comes to baseball, everybody has his own criteria. Some focus on power or clutch hitting, while other anal **George Will**-types look at consistency. For my greenbacks, though, a legend has nothing to do with the numbers. Hell, anybody can get lucky in the post-season, and if you believe the stat-geeks in *Moneyball*, the playoffs are all about luck anyway. No, to attain mythic status, one must perform with style, and it sure don't hurt if that panache has a touch of the middle finger in it. To paraphrase then—who becomes a baseball legend most? Why, the Hack Man, of course.

**Jeffrey Leonard** was born in Hate City, Philadelphia, in 1955, the height of the Cold War—both of which seem appropriate to the man who would later become known as "Penitentiary Face" for his sullen scowl. Ironically, Leonard was signed as an amateur free agent by the dreaded Dodgers, but soon wisely made his way out of the great void and ended up in Houston, where he was named *The Sporting News' Rookie Player of the Year* when he hit .290 with 23 steals for the Astros in 1979. But moving out of a cultural vacuum and into a literal one (the Astrodome sucked the life right of the game) was no way to make yourself a star, so when Jeffrey was traded, along with skill-deficient **Dave Bergman**, to the Giants for the work ethic-challenged **Mike Ivie** in 1981, it was only a matter of time before new nicknames were born.

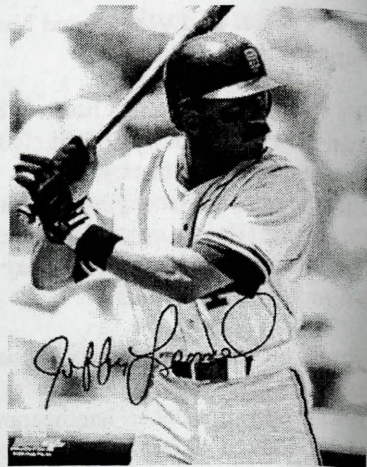
Leonard bided his time by being aggressively mediocre for most of his years with the Giants. His stare was scarier than **Dave Stewart's**, but he couldn't match Stew's playoff heroics or his falsetto. He was known as the "Hack Man" for his aggressive approach at the plate, which is really just a euphemism for a lack of discipline and a long line of strikeouts. No matter. The Giants, after years of bumbling ineptitude, finally returned to prominence under the Hum Baby tutelage of **Roger Craig**, whose down home country manner probably did not sit well with ole Penitentiary Face. But baseball is not about making kissy face—it's about winning. So when the Giants finally won the West in 1987 and went off to face the Cardinals, few knew that a legend would soon be born.

Leonard had changed his Giants uniform number from 20 to 00, perhaps a sign of the nullity of human compassion lurking in his heart, or maybe just a count of the number

of San Francisco Giant championships to this day, and that may have been the catalyst. Or it might have been the sea of St. Louis red hurling abuse in his general direction, fueling his lust for hate and his need to enrage entire cities. Who can say, but when Leonard homered in that first game, it was not the majestic flight of the

ball that suggested a legend in the making. No, it was his trot, the now famous One Flap Down, with one arm held against his side and the other arm extended (one finger would have been too, in a perfect world). That alone would not have been enough, but he went on to homer in Game 2 as well, and Cardinal fans began to notice, and to well up with indignation. How dare he disrespect the house that Bud built?

When the black and orange returned to Frisco for Game 3, Giant outfielder **Chili Davis** (the same man who, when asked by reporters earlier in the season what he did differently after breaking out of a miserable slump and going 4-4 with two homers, replied, "I had 15 Scotch and sodas last night") referred to St. Louis as a "cowtown," which didn't assure the boys a guided tour of the Arch upon their return to Bovine City for Game 6. Of course, Leonard homered in Games 3 and 4, and his One Flap Down rounding of the bases could not have lasted long enough for the hometown faithful. Four games, four homers, all punctuated by the best thirty-second middle finger in Giant history. So when the Giants returned, up three games to two, the suave fans of heiferland taunted the Hack Man, "Jeffrey Leonard eats quiche, "Leonard is a fruit," showing off their devastating wit and progressive political sensibilities. What transpired in those two games I can't recall, having repressed it so deeply that it must be lurking in the same murky strata of my subconscious as the event that stole my childhood, the Immaculate Reception—I do remember watching the games in Boulder, where I was pretending to attend grad school, and three days later, dropping out, driving straight to Vegas and waking up in the backseat of my Rabbit in the



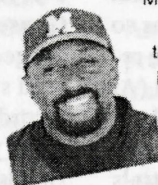


parking lot of a sleazy casino covered in hundred dollar bills, Colt 45 empties and soiled underwear. Like the events of those two days, memory of the final games is lost forever.

The Hack Man came to Spring Training in Scottsdale the next year even meaner than before. A buddy of mine was also there, and he somehow got his hands on one of Jeffrey's cracked bats. Where the etched name should have been, it read, FUCK YOU, and it was inverted so he could put it right at the eye level of the catcher and the ump. Old Testament style rage was eating the man up, and he would never approach his '87 greatness again. The Giants would eventually trade him to Milwaukee for the powerless and non-hitting **Ernest Riles**. Leonard would later briefly rejuvenate his career in Seattle before hanging up the scowl.

The Hack Man spent most of the '90s as a minor league coach and hitting instructor, and would briefly resurface in sports pages in 2001, when **Kevin Mitchell** instigated a brawl against the team Leonard was managing in the Sonoma Independent League. In 2002 the Giants got their revenge against the Cardinals, sealing the deal when another mean-spirited bastard, **Kenny Lofton**, who had nearly started a brouhaha of his own earlier in the series after a brush back pitch, drove in **David Bell** with the winning run in the bottom of the ninth in Game 5. The *San Francisco Chronicle* looked up Jeffrey during the series, to take him for what turned out to be an unpleasant stroll down memory lane: "That series brings back bad memories for me. I still look at that MVP trophy (Leonard was then only the third player in postseason history to win the MVP award while his team lost the series) and have bad feelings. I was never an individual player. I was a team player. I remember holding that trophy during the interviews, saying, 'I want a ring. I want a ring.' **Candy (Maldonado)** messed up two fly balls, and it killed us. If they needed me to rile them up to play, they shouldn't have been playing." And so it's not just me who suffers

Jeffery Leonard begins this season in his first season as head baseball coach of the Marauders.



He came to the program after being the assistant coach for AVC in the 2002 season. He decided to help the Marauder program

in the 2002 season after moving to Lancaster from the Bay Area.

In 2001, he was the Director of Player Personnel and Manager for a Sonoma independent baseball team. Before that he was the Montreal Expos' Hitting Coordinator, Manager of the Oakland A's AA affiliate Huntsville and Manager of the Modesto A's.

"I planned on taking that year off," said Leonard, "but I got the bug to be on the field again."

Leonard spent 14 years in the major leagues, playing for the Los Angeles Dodgers, San Francisco Giants, Milwaukee Brewers and Seattle Mariners. There he received his nickname "Hac-Man," as

**00 Jeffrey "Hac-Man" Leonard**  
Head Baseball Coach

well as the moniker "One flap down" to describe his homerun trot.

He is one of a handful of players to play for both the National and American Leagues



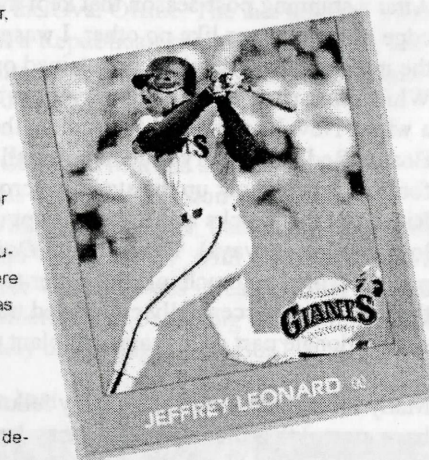
**2003 MARAUDER BASEBALL**

in the All-Star game, representing the Giants and the Mariners.

In the 1987 NLCS against the St. Louis Cardinals, he hit homers in four consecutive games — the only player in the history of the game to accomplish that feat. The bat he used during that streak is now in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, OH

Leonard was signed out of Overbrook High School in Philadelphia by the Dodgers. Overbrook, where Leonard played baseball, basketball, football and ran track, is the *alma mater* of such luminaries as Wilt Chamberlain, Walt Hazard and entertainer Will Smith.

He has two children, Andrea and Nicholas.



acute, pancreatic pains whenever I hear the name **Oquendo**. It's not just me who wakes up in a cold sweat screaming "Death to Maldonado, Death to the Candyman!!!" Jeffrey Leonard may now hold the coveted position of head baseball coach at Antelope Valley College in Lancaster, CA, but god dammit the man still cares about the past. He took on an entire city and almost brought it down, and he did it with the kind of singular, obnoxious flair that forever blurs the line between asshole and hero. What becomes a legend most? One flap down, baby, one flap down.

*Ken Derr lives in Oakland and is deeply concerned about every aspect of this year's Giants roster. He vows that someday, some way, Jose Cruz Jr. will play.*



# Rants From the Upper Deck by Steve Reynolds

Whew, what an offseason. That snapping sound you heard was the Ranter's neck twisting with every new and intriguing development since **Josh Beckett's** wonderful masterpiece to close out the World Series. There was so much going on that it seems like **R.E.M.** could have re-recorded "It's the End of the World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)" and replaced some lyrics with baseball items. Sing it with me now: "**Schilling/A-Rod/Nomar/Manny**/All Going Nowhere/**Vlad's** an Angel/**Pettitte's** Gone/**Clemens** Unretires/**Brown's** In/And Now **Vazquez/Pete Rose**/BALCO Steroids/A-Rod Again/**Maddux** Goes Home Again."

After a stunning post-season that kept me glued to the edge of the recliner like no other, I wasn't that surprised at the intensity level baseball maintained over the winter. While other parts of the U.S. moved on to other sports for a while, New Yorkers still focused on the Yankees-Boston Red Sox rivalry (due in no small part because both football teams stunk up the stadium across the Hudson River and the Knicks and Rangers kept up their not-so-loveable losing ways). The *Post* and *Daily News* sports pages devoted so much ink and paper to A-Rod (between the failed and successfully completed trades) that he should donate part of his salary to plant trees somewhere.

Many folks (including some of my fellows *Zisk* staffers) have argued that the Yankees fantasy league-inspired spending needs to be reigned in with a salary cap of some sort. While I'd love to see the Yankees somehow stopped (and they will be again this year, which I will explain later), forcing them to curb spending isn't the answer. **George Steinbrenner** has laid out the biggest amounts of cash in the majors the past three seasons, but that hasn't bought him another championship. The Yankees of 1996 to 2000 won not because they had the biggest payroll, but because they had a good core of homegrown players and smartly chosen free agents. (Well, that, and that five-year pact with the devil **Joe Torre** signed.) Yes, the baseball economic system is still out of whack, but a salary cap isn't the answer. A salary minimum and a specific amount of shared revenue that must go towards payroll? Now that's something I can get behind.

The BALCO case is bound to take up headlines throughout the season, and deservedly so. Yes, players obviously were able to juice their numbers over the years. And yes, they were stupid to risk their health for so many

years. And yes, they look idiotic for not coming up with a stronger testing plan ages ago. But if steroids make everyone play better, why aren't **Ken Caminiti** and **Jose Canseco** still playing in their late '30s like another alleged user, **Barry Bonds**? If Bonds is found to have used steroids, people will say his single season home run record is tainted. Well, last time I checked, steroids don't make your eyes as good as Bonds's. And it's not like Bonds wasn't one of the most talented players ever before the alleged steroid scam started. (And trust me, I would never want to defend the pricks of all pricks Bonds, but somebody has to cut through the crap with this case.)

And while we're on the drug front, does steroid use by major league ballplayers need to be mentioned in **President Bush's** State of the Union address? Does Attorney General **John Ashcroft** need to hold a press conference in Washington, D.C. to announce the findings of a grand jury all the way across the country? Might there be some more pressing issues at the moment? Perhaps trying to find out where **Osama Bin Laden** is? Or figuring out where the intelligence breakdown happened over weapons of mass-destruction? Or why job growth has been at its slowest in decades? Politics has pushed the steroid issue further into the spotlight, and if it wasn't an election year, **Bud Selig** and **Don Fehr** would be nowhere near a Congressional committee. That being said, let's hope the owners and players sit down and hash out a real testing plan at some point so fans and sanctimonious sportswriters will be happy.

So now that the dust has settled on the off-season, what will 2004 bring? Well, for the AL East—perhaps more properly called the AL Beast—it's a season in which the division is far and away the best in baseball. The Toronto Blue Jays could most likely win the AL Central or NL West with the young pitching and hitting they have, while the Baltimore Orioles and Tampa Bay Devil Rays could be .500 teams in the Central. I've heard of the East Coast bias about West Coast sports teams, but who in their right mind could not think that the battles in this division will be like no other this year. And in the end, the Ranter will go for Yankees winning the division with the Red Sox again claiming the wild card.

The AL Central is stocked with three teams (Minnesota Twins, Kansas City Royals and Cleveland Indians) that have put a successful small market plan into action. By

growing their own players and picking up a quality free agent here and there, these three teams have set foundations to compete for the next few years. But the Indians aren't quite there yet, and the Twins lost too much bullpen in the off-season. So the Royals will become division winners for the first time since **George Brett** roamed the infield.

The AL West is the second best division in baseball, with the Oakland Athletics, the Seattle Mariners and California Angels all making the postseason with the past three seasons. Alas for Mariners fans, they look like a team that's about to go on a down cycle as key parts get older (**Edgar Martinez**, **John Olerud**, **Jamie Moyer**) and a front office that made only one decent move in the off-season (signing "**Everyday Eddie**" **Guadardo**). The A's lost another former MVP (**Miguel Tejada**), but still have great pitching. However, both teams will be trumped by the Angels, who were busy spending their new owner **Art Moreno's** money. And he'll be happy, as **Vlad Guerrero** and **Bartolo Colon** will be just the pieces that manager **Mike Scioscia** needs to get back to the playoffs.

In the NL, the East and Central divisions will both come down to the last days of the season. The Braves lost a third of their offense with the defections of **Gary Sheffield**, **Javy Lopez** and **Vinnie Castilla**, so the possibility of them not winning the division looms large for the first time. The Phillies will finally be able to close some games with **Billy Wagner** in the pen. But what most folks seem to overlook are the World Champion Marlins. **Derek Lee** is gone, **Pudge Rodriguez** is in exile in the Motor City and both closers (**Brandon Loper**, **Ugeth Urbina**) are gone, replaced by Mr. Choke himself, **Armando Benitez**. But the young core of this team is still together and has been battle-tested by last year's playoff run. I think the Marlins will take the division led by Josh Beckett blossoming into a premier pitcher, with the Phillies as the wild card to save **Larry Bowa** from the ax.

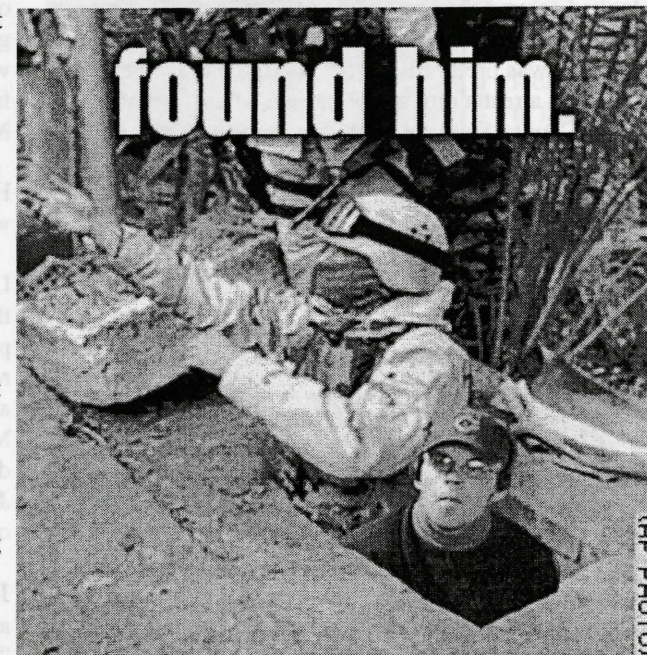
The NL Central will once again be a three team race. The St. Louis Cardinals have a great lineup, but they still don't have the pitching. The Houston Astros now have pitching with the additions of **Roger Clemens** and **Andy Pettite**, but **Jeff Bagwell** and **Craig Biggio** are certainly on the downside of their careers. This leaves the Cubs, who not only have the pitching but also have solidified their hitting the trade for the Marlins' **Derek Lee**. The Cubs will repeat as division winners for the first time ever. The NL West is up for grabs—I've even seen someone

taut the San Diego Padres as potential division winners. The guess here is that the Giants will make the playoffs for a third year in a row, unless the steroid scandal truly blows up and Bonds is suspended.

As for the playoffs (here comes that Yankee theory I promised), the ALCS will come down once again to the Yanks and Red Sox, with the Sox taking it in seven games because the bullpen will hold a lead this year. The Yankees will once again go without a title, which can be blamed upon one man—**George W. Bush**. Actually, that's not entirely correct. The Yanks drought can be blamed on the Republican party. The New York Yankees have won 19 of their championships while Democrats have been in the White House and only seven with Republicans in the Oval Office. The last time the Yankees won a title with a Republican president was 1958. The **Eisenhower** curse will live another year. Steinbrenner better vote for **John Kerry**.

In the NL, the Cubs and Marlins are destined for a rematch, and this time **Moises Alou** will catch the winning out. Which means—yes, I am crazy—a "world is coming to an end World Series" with the Cubs versus the Red Sox. And the winner? Does it really matter? Baseball, indeed, all of America will be the big winner this October. (But I'll definitely be rooting for the Sox).

And finally, the best doctored picture ever:



(GFP PHOTO)



# The Last Days at Fulton County Stadium by Sean Carswell

Probably nobody would've gotten kicked out if I hadn't been running my big mouth. I had a lot of beer in me, though. And there's just something about the Atlanta Braves. They bring out the asshole in me.

My accomplice, like half the women of my generation, was named **Jennifer**. As far as friends named Jennifer go, this one wasn't in my top five Jennifers. Definitely in the top ten, though. She was a decent enough girl. We had enough in common, like that we both had the day off and we both wanted to get drunk on our day off and we both figured a Braves game was as good of a place as any to get drunk. So there we were, getting drunk and watching the Houston Astros take the Braves to task. Jennifer tapped me on the shoulder and said, "I gotta go to the bathroom." I nodded and kept looking down at the field. Jennifer didn't stand up. "No, really," she said, "I'm gonna go to the bathroom." She sat there looking at me until I snapped out of it and realized that she was giving me some kind of stoner hint that she wanted the one-hitter so that she could smoke pot in the bathroom.

"Oh, okay," I said. I pulled the one-hitter and the lighter out of the pockets of my plaid, cotton shorts and I put them in her hand. She left.

I looked around the Fulton County Stadium. In a month, the Braves were leaving it and moving to Turner Field. In general, I was pretty pissed off about the move because I worked in a restaurant in downtown Atlanta, right by Fulton County Stadium, and I made most of my money

good times at Fulton County Stadium, like all the times my buddy **Pete** would bring his camera bag to games and we would fill his empty film canisters up with whiskey and get drunk as hell on one whiskey and coke apiece. Or that sixteen inning game that I went to with my sister and her boyfriend that finally ended when **Deion Sanders** outran a bunt, stole two bases, and scored the winning run on a routine infield grounder.

After my wave of nostalgia passed and Astros retired the side, Jennifer came back glassy-eyed. She handed me the one-hitter and said, "We better be cool about that. I think the security guard down by the bathroom is on to us."

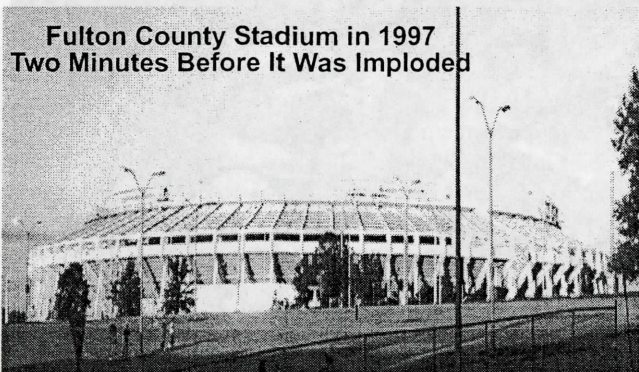
"Damn it," I said. "I hate the Braves."

I stuffed the one-hitter back into my pockets, not realizing that no more pot-smoking and my general hatred of the Braves was gonna seal the fate of the crowd around me. I guess I did know that I'd get grumpy pretty quickly, though. Because truth was, I really hated the Braves. And it wasn't because they were moving stadiums and taking my job with them. It wasn't even because I'd lost that same job two years earlier when Major League Baseball went on strike. No. I hated the Braves long before that. I hated them since I was a little kid and the only baseball games I could see on TV were Braves games. I hated them ever since the only choice for hero worship they offered me was .281 hitting, John-Boy-from-*The-Waltons*-look-alike outfielder named **Dale Murphy**.

Hell, let's be honest. I hated the Braves when Murphy was still a .226 hitting first baseman.

Let's be even more honest. I hated the Braves so much that they were my favorite team. I could never muster the passion or fury rooting *for* a baseball team that I had routing *against* the Braves. I looked up at the scoreboard, and realized the fifth inning was about to start already. More than half of my heckling time had passed, and I'd done almost no heckling. I drank my beer and watched **John Smoltz** jog out to the pitcher's mound and thought of ways to get cracking.

Jennifer settled into her seat and picked up her beer. After a minute of silence, she asked, "What did I miss?" "The Astros ran off the field. The Braves ran on.



Fulton County Stadium in 1997  
Two Minutes Before It Was Imploded

off of Braves fans on their way to Braves games. When the team switched stadiums, I was going to lose my job. Jennifer was going to lose hers, too. But, to tell the truth, that's not really what I thought about. I thought about



Everyone played catch.”

“That all?”

“That and I remembered that the Astros used to be my favorite team,” I said. “When I was a kid growing up in Florida, the Astros would spring train right by where I lived. My dad would take me to games. The Astros sucked then, but, man, they were my heroes when I was eight years old.”

“Really,” Jennifer said. “I thought you told me you hated baseball.”

“I don’t hate it. I love to hate it. There’s a difference.”

I glanced back down at the field. **Derek Bell**, one of the two Astros whom I’d heard of prior to the game, stepped up to the plate. I shouted out, “Give ‘em hell, Derek Bell.”

A guy two rows in front of me—whose name, I later found out, was either **Baumer** or **Bomber**—turned and gave me a dirty look. I smiled. He turned back and yelled, “Go to hell, Derek Bell.” I looked at the back of his t-shirt, where he had a silkscreened picture of **Bill Clinton** with his nose growing like Pinocchio’s.

Jennifer nudged me. “You pissed off the young Republican,” she said.

“Have you ever heard that ‘Johnny Smoke’ song by the **Butthole Surfers**?” I asked Jennifer.

“No,” she said.

“Do you want to know how it goes?”

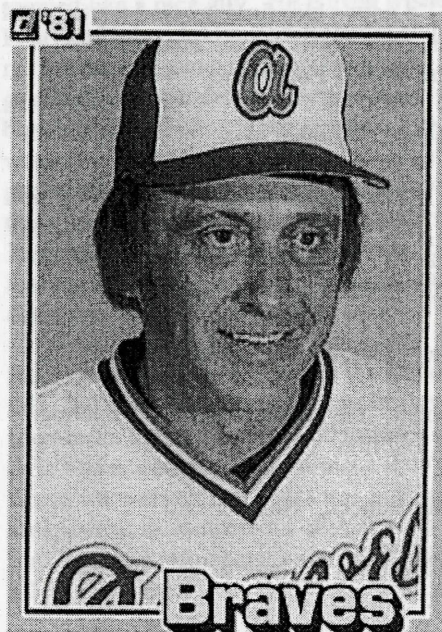
Jennifer shrugged her shoulders, not really knowing where I was going with this. “Sure.”

It’s a weird, chanting song. Very repetitive. Full of barnyard noises that I didn’t have the ability to make. Still, I started to sing, loud enough for the two rows in front of me to hear, “Johnny Smoltz, oh Johnny Smoltz. Oh Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny.” Jennifer smiled. “Sing with me,” I said. And I guess she’d had enough beers because she sang with me, “Johnny Smoltz, oh Johnny Smoltz. Oh Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny.” We kept singing it until Derek Bell cracked a double of

the left field wall and Bomber the young Republican yelled, “Fuck!”

A little bit of anger from a Braves fan fueled me. The fact that Jennifer was so clearly going to be a willing co-conspirator kept me going. We talked about watching baseball as kids. Jennifer’s father was a big fan of the Minnesota Twins, even though her family was from South Carolina, because he thought that **Rod Carew** was the best. I told her that, when I was growing up, my best friend used to practice Rod Carew’s batting stance in the mirror. That he always thought the key to good hitting was getting down in the crouch. She had no idea what I was talking about, so she just said, “Baseball was better when we were kids. I don’t know what happened. I don’t know if it’s me or the game that changed.”

“You just gotta root for the past,” I said. And, as if he were helping me out, Smoltz threw a wild pitch that advanced Bell to third base. “Smoltz, you suck,” I screamed. “Put in **Phil Niekro**.”



PHIL NIEKRO PITCHER

Smoltz,” I said.

Bomber the young Republican turned around and said, “Smoltz isn’t a knuckleballer.”

“Smoltz, you throw like a girl,” Jennifer screamed, not really catching on to my joke.

A sorta hick-looking dude in front of me turned around and said, “Phil Niekro? That old boy’s gotta be about sixty by now.”

“And he still throws a better knuckleball than John



I glared at him through my one sober eye, the eye I could still keep all the way open and said, "Not the way he throws, he ain't."

The hick-looking dude started cracking up at this. "Goddamn, you're having a good time. I need to hang with you." He introduced himself to me and Jennifer. Said his name was **Shane**. He introduced his grandfather, an old, smiling fellow wearing dirty jeans and a John Deere cap. The grandfather didn't say anything, just lifted his beer to us. "I got stuck hanging out with old Granddad," Shane said. Old Granddad's smile faded a little, and he kept watching the game.

In time, I convinced Shane and Jennifer to chant our "Johnny Smoltz" song, and we came up with new ways to annoy the young Republican. When the Braves third baseman, **Chipper Jones**, came to the plate, I yelled, "You suck, **Bob Horner**." Which is what I always yelled at the TV when the Braves third baseman came up to the plate in 1978, and I figured, so what if it isn't 1978 and Bob Horner hasn't played pro baseball in a generation. When the young Republican told me to get out of the seventies, I knew I'd gotten him fired up. So I waited until the Braves catcher, **Javy Lopez**, struck out, I started screaming, "You're no **Biff Pocoroba**!"

"Biff Pocoroba sucked," Bomber said.

"And Javy Lopez isn't even *that* good," I said.

This cracked Shane up. He told Bomber, "You walked right into that one." Jennifer and I laughed.

Bomber told Shane, "Shut up, you fucking redneck."

"Calm down, Bomber," the young Republican's young Republican friend told him.

"No, man, fuck this redneck," Bomber said.

"What the fuck did you say?" Shane asked. Bomber didn't turn around.

I decided that this was a good time to quit stirring up shit. I finished up my beer and noticed that Jennifer was empty, too. It was getting close to the end of the sixth inning. Beer sales would end in the next few minutes, so I told Jennifer that I was gonna head down to the concession stand. "Be careful," she said, I guess thinking

that I was speaking in code and really planning on going to the bathroom to smoke pot.

I walked down the ramp towards the beer stand and noticed that the security guard did seem to be watching me. I wasn't sure if Jennifer had made me paranoid or not. I took a right turn and headed for the bathroom. The security guard ambled in the same general direction. I figured that he wasn't checking me out or following me or anything, that his movements in my direction were merely coincidence. And I really did have to take a leak. I walked into the bathroom and up to a urinal.

As I was doing my business, I got that weird feeling like someone was watching me, which isn't a good feeling to have when part of your genitals are exposed in a public place. Not that I was exposing myself. I was well hidden by the urinal, but still, I didn't like that feeling that someone was watching me, so I glanced around the bathroom really quickly and, sure enough, that damn security guard was standing right by the bathroom door, watching me piss. "I hate the Braves," I mumbled.

I was so angry that I forgot about the beers and went back to my seat empty-handed.

Jennifer asked me if I forgot something. I was too flustered to answer. I tried to mumble something about how having a grown man follow you into the bathroom to watch you pee just throws off your whole afternoon, but I couldn't think of the right way to express it, and anyway it didn't matter because a beer guy was coming down the aisle just as I was about to talk. I flagged him down.

The beers were three-fifty a piece. I reached into my pocket and saw that I had a twenty and a five. The beer guy asked me how many I wanted. I did some quick math and said, "Six, please." He started to pour them out.

"What are you going to do with six beers?" Jennifer asked.

"Drink 'em," I said, but the truth was that I hadn't thought about how little time was left in the game and how much beer that really was. I'd just figured out how many I could get with what I had, and I ordered that. When the guy finished pouring the beers, I gave him the twenty-five bucks and told him to keep the change.

Now that I had six beers, I gave one to Shane because it



"Happy Fourth of July," old Granddad said, because, though I'd completely forgotten about it, it was the Fourth of July.

**Sports Illustrated**

MARCH 5, 1981 \$1.00

**THE  
COMEBACK  
BEGINS**

*J.R. Richard*

**Seven Months After  
His Massive Stroke,  
J.R. Richard  
Takes the Mound**

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Jennifer laughed at how ridiculous it was and I kept going about how I'd met J.R. Richard and got him to sign my copy of *Sports Illustrated* that he was on the cover of—which actually was true. I even told her about his tragic demise, the stroke he had in the middle of the 1980 season, his painful and mostly failed comeback attempt. Jennifer expressed the right amount of sympathy. I paused to drink.

I looked at Jennifer and she looked at me and we both looked at Granddad but he didn't look at anything but the field. I didn't know what to say, so I kept my mouth shut. Same with Jennifer. I felt bad for old Granddad. He seemed like a nice guy. He'd even wished me a happy Fourth of July. And my grandfather had never once taken me to baseball game, or anywhere else. Hell, my grandfather never did anything with me except make a bunch of mean jokes at my expense. To be honest, I would've been just as happy to be at that game with a grandfather who was actually grandfatherly as I was at that game with a top-ten-but-not-top-five-favorite Jennifer. So I was at a loss for words. Shane kept looking at me and Jennifer. Finally, Jennifer said, "Why don't you just watch the game, dude?"

It was too much for the young Republican. His team went down by three runs just as he got drenched in beer. He jumped up and shouted, "You fucking asswipe. You stupid fucking redneck."

Shane was ready for this, though. He was still stewing



over the first time he'd been called a redneck. He leapt to his feet and said, "Maybe an ass-kicking would straighten things out."

A few people told them to calm down. Granddad even stood up to hold the guys at arm's length from each other. Bomber slapped Granddad's hand out of the way. "That's it," Shane said. "Step downstairs and we'll settle this." He stormed down the aisle, towards the bathroom.

Bomber started down the aisle, but then cut across a row of fans so that he could walk down a different exit ramp than Shane had gone down.

The Braves retired the side. We had the seventh inning stretch. Everyone sang "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." The Braves had a scoreless bottom of the seventh, leaving one runner on base. The Astros went three-up, three-down. During this time, four things happened in the cheap seats in front of me.

One, old Granddad decided to go hunt down Shane and pull him out of trouble.

Two, Shane returned without old Granddad and asked Bomber's friend what happened to Bomber. Bomber's friend said, "I don't know. Sit down."

Three, Bomber came back. The security guard who'd watched me take a pee was with him. Bomber pointed out Shane. The security guard said, "Please come with me, sir."

Four, old Granddad came back, looking very confused. Bomber was in his seat, but Shane was gone. Old Granddad looked right at me and said, "Have you seen my grandson?"

I didn't have the heart to tell him. I didn't have time to tell him, anyway, because Bomber was saying, "He went bye-bye." Just like old Granddad was senile or a small child, Bomber kept saying, "He's all gone. He went bye-bye."

The old man's face kinda sagged and looked like it aged a bit. He took a slow look at all that outfield grass, then started walking down the aisle. Bomber waved to him. "Bye-bye. Bye-bye."

In a way, it broke my heart and in another way, I wanted

to launch over the seat and scrape my knuckles on that smug little bastard. I didn't do either. I just watched the old man's slumped shoulders as he walked away. At first, I thought he should've stuck around for the last inning and a half. He could've hung out with me and Jennifer. I would've split my last beer with him. But, of course, he couldn't do that. And something about the way he trudged down the stairs of that aisle and out of the game made me see how I kinda felt inside about baseball. Because I wanted to stick it out to the end of the games, but somewhere between Biff Pocoroba and Javy Lopez, between Phil Neikro and John Smoltz, I lost something big. Sure, I was about to lose the stadium that meant baseball to me, and, sure, I'd lost the inclination to worship twenty-five-year-old men just because they could throw and catch and hit. But it seemed like something bigger was riding on that old Granddad's shoulders. Like neither of us had been kicked out, but in a way, it was time for both of us to leave.

I didn't leave, though. I just sat there until I finally said, more or less to Bomber, "Man, I hate Braves fans."

I don't know what Jennifer was thinking during this time, but whatever it was, it motivated some action out of her. She threw her mostly empty plastic beer cup at Bomber, nailing him in the back. The dregs of her last swallow of beer and bits of backwash splashed up onto the silkscreened, big-nosed president. Bomber spun around, fists up. Jennifer just said, "Sit down, asshole."

There wasn't much left for him to do. It wasn't like he could run and tattle to the security guard over that one. Besides, a few guys behind me had taken up the battle and started yelling, "Down in front," and other variations with the same sentiment, but more profanity. Bomber sat down.

And that was it. In another month, the Braves would leave that stadium and take all their million-dollar men and spineless yuppie fans and pee-watching security guards with them. I'd stop going to games and start looking for a new job. It the meantime, there wasn't much left for me to do except finish my beers and watch the sun set over one and a half scoreless innings.

*Sean Carswell is a co-founder of Razorcake Magazine and has written a couple of books. He also has an autographed 1978 Joe Sambito baseball card, and he's not selling it.*



# Richard Nixon, Reggie Jackson, and My List of Enemies Mike Faloon

There is an old saying...opinions about why Americans continue to despise former president **Richard Nixon** are like assholes, everyone has one. Here is mine: even from the grave, Dick reminds us of our uglier selves. Who among us doesn't yield to paranoia once in awhile? Who doesn't cover up the occasional mistake at work? And who doesn't keep a list of enemies? I know I do, a list of my baseball enemies.

I was nine when I began my list. It was Game 4 of the 1978 World Series. The Dodgers were up two games to one and clearly en route to avenging their defeat in the '77 Series, my first fall classic. I was in Mr. "I use the girls' bathroom because it's a jungle in the boys' room" Hogan's third grade class, and the only kid in the class rooting for the Dodgers. I knew nothing about the Dodgers prior to the series, but I knew that everyone in my class was pulling for the Yankees and my contrarian instincts led me to siding with **Lasorda** and company. Thus, my first World Series experience was one of social isolation and, when the Dodgers lost in six games, disappointment.

But '78 was going to be different. The Dodgers were going to win, and I had an ally in **Darin Watkins**. He was not in my class, but he was in the class next door. And this being the '70s and the era of open classrooms (In the school's new wing, the classrooms were not separated by walls. Instead, a combination of cabinets, closets, and other storage units—all on wheels, none going from floor to ceiling, and at least one of which was a mere three to four feet high—divided one room from the next), Darin and I were able to touch base during the day. I remember leaning over the short counter in the short time between reading and math and discussing the series with Darin. We had a lot to talk about because the Dodgers had taken Game One in an 11-5 romp, and then won Game 2 in classic Davey and Goliath style. Dodger rookie reliever **Bob Welch** entered the ninth inning protecting a fragile 4-3 lead. **Reggie Jackson** came to the plate with two on and two out. The count went full and Jackson fouled off a trio of 3-2 offerings before Welch struck out Mr. October on the following pitch.

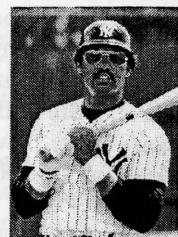
We were the only kids not rooting for the Yankees and we were certain that the Dodgers were going to win it all in '78. Revenge for '77 was in the air, bragging rights were imminent. Then Reggie Jackson stuck his ass in the way

of our destiny. Or rather his hip.

Jackson had slugged the Yankees past the Dodgers in '77, and though I disliked the guy, there was no denying his talent. Three home runs in a World Series game is the stuff of legend. In '77 Jackson had earned the Yankees a World Series title; in '78 he stole it for them.

Game 4, bottom of the sixth. Jackson was on first when **Lou Pinella** sent a low, soft liner to Dodger shortstop **Bill Russell**. Jackson assumed that Russell would catch the liner, so he, Jackson, stayed close to first. But Russell did not catch the liner. Instead he fielded it on a hop, flipped it to second baseman **Davey Lopes** who then relayed the ball to first baseman **Steve Garvey**. Only the ball never made it to Garvey. Jackson stuck out his hip and sent the ball into right field. Pinella reached base safely and ignited a Yankee rally. The pinstripes never looked back, going on to win the next three games and take the series in six.

At least that is the way I remember it. The record books will tell you different. They will minimize the impact of Jackson's egregious actions. They will say that the Yankees scored but one run in the fateful sixth inning and did not tie the game until the eighth. They will tell further tales of the Yankees not winning the game until the bottom of the tenth. Do not trust the record books. I know what I saw. Jackson looked right at me and said, "Do you want to know what heartache feels like, kid? This is what you get for letting hope seep into your soul" just before he deliberately deflected Lopes' throw. And he knew, like I knew, that he had just snuffed out the Dodgers' momentum, that the Dodger collapse was underway, that he had stolen a World Series championship while millions watched.



And what better way to deal with bitter resentment than to start an enemies list?

Next issue: Enemy #2 - The Atlanta Braves

*Mike Faloon is the publisher of Zisk. He denies allegations that he is currently in negotiations with G. Gordon Liddy and other former members of CREEP.*



# The Pete Rose Case: One Fan's Opinion by Jeff Herz

## PETE ROSE

My Prison Without Bars

with Rick Hill

It is two days before **Pete Rose**'s book comes out and he is the talk of the sports world. I was at the gym last night watching (reading the captions of, actually) some talking heads on CNN Headline News discuss this matter. One proclaimed ethics expert spoke of America's ability to forgive and forget. He was essentially saying that Pete Rose has spent the last 14 years in purgatory and therefore has paid his punishment, deserves to be

forgiven by the master asshole himself **Bud Selig**, and should be reinstated back into baseball.

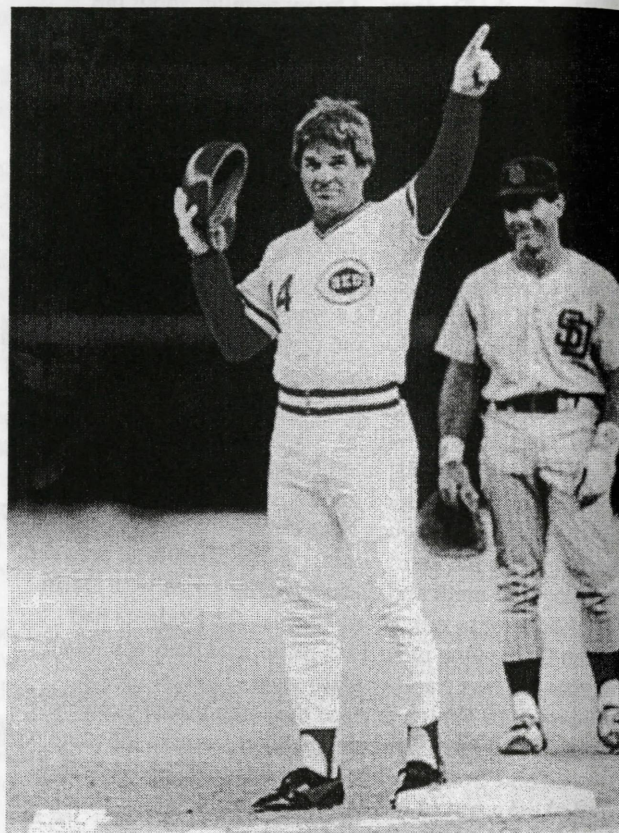
This schmock clearly knows nothing about baseball and even less about Pete Rose. First off, there is one cardinal rule in baseball that is made 100% clear in any locker room (or so I am told since I have never been in a major league locker room)—*gambling is not allowed*. Even today's whipping boy, illegal drugs doesn't have the same effect as gambling does. Just ask any of these former players: **Steve Howe, Darryl Strawberry, Keith Hernandez, Dwight Gooden, Willie Aikens, Ferguson Jenkins, Otis Nixon, Leon Durham, Vida Blue and Pascual Perez**. They were all suspended for drug use and returned to the game after their suspensions.

Not since the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919, has a person associated with MLB returned to the game after being associated with gambling or gamblers. Even **Mickey Mantle** and **Willie Mays** were asked to disassociate themselves from the Yankees and Giants in the 1980s by Commissioner **Bowie Kuhn**, when they were employed as greeters at casinos in Las Vegas and Atlantic City.

Whether you agree with the precedent or not, gambling is the death penalty in baseball! (Anyone heard from the SMU football team since they received this judgment from NCAA in 1987?) Pete Rose now admits he gambled on baseball while he was managing the Cincinnati Reds. He claims not to have done it from the field, though the **Dowd** report has wiretaps from the manager's office to

his bookie, he claims not to have used insider information to his advantage, which is impossible considering he is an insider and would know if his closer is tired or his cleanup hitter tweaked a hamstring<sup>1</sup>, and he admits he only bet on the Reds to win, which in my mind contradicts the not acting on insider information statement. By not betting on your team on days you know you are benching certain players is just as bad as betting on your team when all your players are on fire.

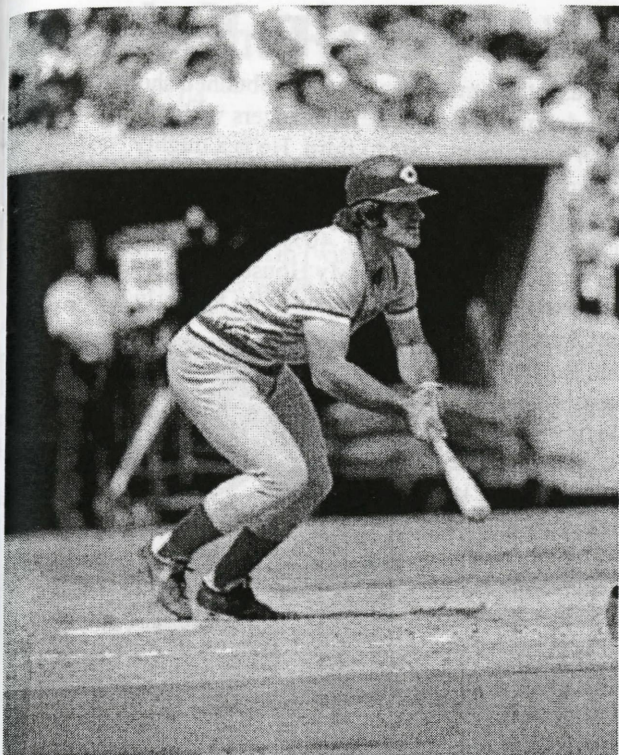
After 14 years of lying, he has finally admitted he was gambling. Big fucking deal. To think Rose was not betting on baseball you have to have been living on Mars since 1989 when **A. Bart Giamatti**, the last real commissioner of MLB (who subsequently dropped dead



of heart attack a few days later) suspended Rose for life, with the opportunity to apply for reinstatement after one year. If he has been lying for so long, why should I believe him now?

<sup>1</sup>Jayson Stark, ESPN.com, January 6, 2004





What I have not seen or heard from him is an apology to the fans, and this gives me no reason to welcome him back to the game. **Mike Francesa** pointed out on WFAN in NY that Rose is broke and is desperate to get back into the game. Rose has lied for 14 years and he is carefully crafting the book, the interviews, and every other piece of PR for two reasons. The first is to get into the Baseball Hall of Fame, which he deserves—in spite of being a slimy creature who should crawl back under the rock beneath which he came. The second is to return to a role in organized baseball. But what role should putz master Buddy S. allow Peter to play?

The ownership of the Cincinnati Reds would hire Rose again in a minute assuming the used car salesman from Milwaukee gives #14 a full reprieve and unlimited entry back into the game. Others have suggested that Rose should be allowed to be a spring training instructor but not allowed to be a fulltime employee of an MLB organization, essentially keeping him away from real games and subsequently keeping him away from temptation. What will the man who decided, "I am going to call the All-Star game a tie," do? I don't know, but here is my suggestion.

A (real) commissioner of MLB would lift the banishment for the sole purpose of allowing the BBWA to induct Rose into the Hall of Fame prior to 2006, when his eligibility expires. Let's face it; there are a lot of nasty folks in that building who did some bad shit. It is a place for the best baseball players of all-time, not a personality contest. And let's face it, though I have issues with hangers-on (**Dave Winfield, Don Sutton**), Rose personified baseball in the '60s, '70s and '80s with his "Charlie Hustle" style of play. We would be able to celebrate Rose the player, not Rose the manager, not Rose the gambler. He would be in Cooperstown, and then he would go away, off the baseball radar.

If Rose is allowed into Cooperstown, he should not be granted anything else. He should not be allowed to be a spring training instructor, he should not be allowed to be general manager, he should not be allowed to be a field manager, he should not be allowed to participate in an old-timers' game, he should not be allowed to be involved in publicity nights, he should have no contact with the game without expressed written consent of the commissioner of MLB. There has to be some punishment for gambling, and keeping him off the field away from the game is the best way to accomplish that. But that is just me.

Assuming Selig does reinstate Rose in some manner, isn't it time that **Shoeless Joe Jackson** also be reinstated?



Unfortunately, Joe did less than Rose and has been banned much longer than him. Jackson was a poor Southerner who played in a different age and there is no one left to take up his cause. He received a lifetime ban in 1920, and his lifetime ended in 1951. His still has the third highest all-time average, which to me is a much more substantial record than total number of hits.

It boils down to this—Pete Rose: in Cooperstown, but off the field.



# I Call Him Skywalker by Kip Yates

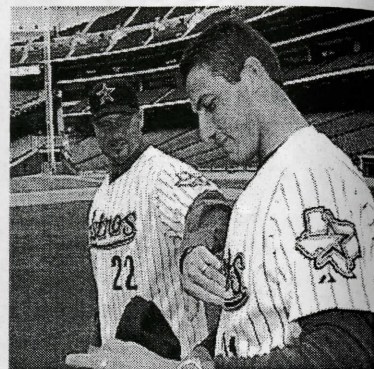
It was close to midnight, October 22nd 2003, game four of the World Series, the New York Yankees up two games to one, the Florida Marlins clinging to a tenuous two run lead, top of the ninth, two runners on and **Ruben Sierra** one strike away from ending the Yankee threat. A Marlins win would even the series at two games a piece. Sierra lines a shot down the right field line; two run triple, tie ball game. I remember it so well because that was when my wife, **Jamie**, announced, "Kip, it's time!" At that moment, that particular game ceased to exist, for me anyway. I could hardly care less about what happened now. So what! The Yankees would somehow pull this one out and win either game five or six and yet another World Series Championship. I wouldn't know until much later that the Marlins somehow hung on for the next three innings and won the game on a 12th inning **Alex Gonzalez** home run. Tied Series! I didn't know until later that afternoon. I had more pressing concerns. My son **River** was born a few hours earlier and because of some minor complications, was staying in the hospital special care ward. The next few days were a blur and the World Series was an after thought. I witnessed the last two gut-wrenching innings of game five and then slept off my very busy day. River was getting better by the hour but had to stay in special care for five days. By the time, I had the inclination to care, The Marlins had defeated the



Yankees 4 games to 2 and I missed it. I missed **Josh Beckett's** near immortal game and series clincher. The Yankees, as in 2001 and 2002 were defeated. Then I started to think: the Yanks are 0 for River, meaning that since my son was born, the Yankees had not won a game. My lord, how long into April 2004 would this streak go? Thus I dubbed him **Skywalker**. For at his birth began the crumbling of the Evil Empire.

You could argue with me if you want to, but facts are facts. The Yankees we have known for the past decade are falling apart. They are older and have traded away younger talent for uber-expensive flavors of the month. **George Steinbrenner** is up to his old tricks. **Joe Torre** is on the hot seat as the season begins more than he ever has been. **Don Zimmer** was practically driven away to the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. The team's biggest free agent acquisitions are over 35 years of age. They lacked a legitimate third baseman thanks to **Aaron Boone's** off

season basketball misadventures and obtained shortstop **Alex Rodriguez** from the Texas Rangers with the intention of switching him to third. He is a mighty expensive band-aid. Their former MVP first baseman has shaky health. To top it all off, 60% of their 2003 starting rotation is gone and best of all, 40% of last year's rotation will now call Houston home. My Houston Astros signed **Andy Pettitte** and **Roger Clemens**. The formerly hated Roger Clemens now revered Roger Clemens! (See my article in issue #7 and check out **Red's** [Ed: **Zisk** contributor **Lisa Alcock**] current article, a defamation of my very character, in this issue.) Does it get any better than one of the greatest pitchers of our generation and another of the most consistent pitchers of the past decade suiting up for my team? Well, River smiled at me the other day so maybe it does get better. The Houston Astros don't make off season moves like this all of the time. I thought signing **Jeff Kent** last year was an aberration but this winter has been off the charts abnormal.



So, let's get down to brass tacks. I am aware of what I wrote last year about Roger Clemens and maybe **Jerry Seinfeld** is right when he says that we don't cheer for players, but rather we cheer for laundry. Roger Clemens is wearing the right laundry and that is all that has to be said. He is **Anakin Skywalker**. He fought for the good guys (Texas Longhorns and Boston Red Sox) and was swayed over to the dark side (the Yankees). He is now that battle-hardened veteran we see at the end of the last *Star Wars* episode, though not dead and glowing lime green while Ewoks dance around. Remember the end of the movie when Luke pulls off the helmet Darth Vader wore and for the first time we saw the man he used to be before he became a machine? That is Roger! He was lulled out of retirement and will figure prominently among an already good staff with the Astros. He just makes them better. He makes them more formidable. He and Pettitte bring a winning attitude to their hometown team. They have joined the rebel alliance and we all know that the good guys win in the end.



# What an Astro (Fan): Why I Think My Friend Kip is a Wiener By Lisa Alcock

Monday, 1.12.04

I am at work and I just received an e-mail from my friend **Evan** informing me that **Roger Clemens** has signed with the Astros, press conference at 3:00 pm. I immediately e-mail my good friend, **Kip** (with whom I work and who you might remember wrote a scathing, anti-Clemens article in the previous issue of *Zisk*, titled: "Why I Think Roger Clemens is a Wiener") whose immediate response is: "SWEET!!! You made my day!" My response is: "Huh?? What??? Who abducted my friend? Kip? Kip???" I feel like **Michael Corleone** when he's betrayed by his brother, **Fredo**. You broke my heart, Kip. Sigh.

God is dead.  
There is no Santa Claus.  
I've lost faith.  
I feel lost and alone.

Oh, Kip. What happened to your vitriol? How misguided you've become. I don't even know who you are anymore. Remember when we both agreed on Clemens? We both thought he was a jackass. Remember when we rejoiced every time Clemens and the Yankees lost the World Series? Allow me, kind sir, to quote your article that appeared in the last issue of *Zisk*:

"I love to root against Roger Clemens. I can't stand to see him win..."

"No, my vitriol was saved for Roger Clemens."

"Since his trade to the Yankees, Roger Clemens has done incredibly stupid act after annoying act..."

"Well do us all a favor Roger, and puh-lease, make an ass out of yourself one more time."

Did you forget that it was I who gave you the title for your aforementioned article? What's happened?? Did becoming a dad make you more tolerant? Kip, how can I believe anything you now say? You've gone over to the dark side. You can say nothing to convince me otherwise. (Kip has just come over to my desk and while dancing sings: "I heart Roger Clemens!" about five times, and it took all my might to restrain myself and not punch him).

I don't like Roger. Never have. Especially not since he

beated **Piazza** in the head...and threw bat fragments at him. He's a wiener, period. Please, Roger, stay retired and go play golf or whatever it is retired ballplayers do.

Well, I guess this is the reality now—Clemens is an Astro. I can't help but now wonder: will Roger bat when the Astros come to Shea Stadium this year? Hrmmm...well, wait, maybe there is a bright side to this story. Nah, he'll probably have a clause in his contract that states he only pitches home games. Though, he did face **Shawn Estes** in 2002. (That was a great game. I was there. Roger's first time at Shea after the "incidents," the entire stadium erupting in chants of "Rooooooger, Rooooooger." Estes struck him out...and then Estes got a grand slam off of the wiener. The Mets shut out the Yankees too.) Fans don't forget. I don't forget. Step up to the plate, Roger Dodger. You've made several enemies in your career.

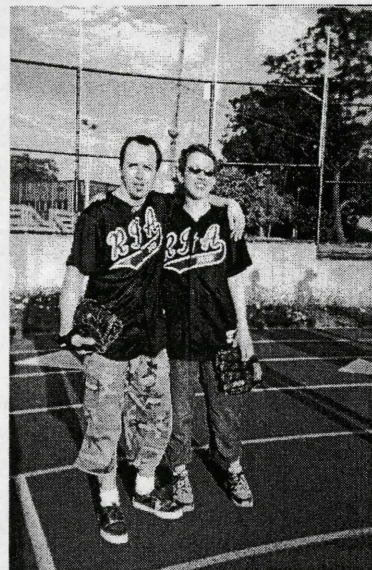
So, today I learned a valuable lesson: my friends are not infallible. Kip is still my good friend, even if he is misguided. I will say that I'm now prepared for (almost) anything.

Next thing you know Kip is going to tell me that he's a Yankees fan.

*Author's note:*

*Can Lisa and Kip put aside their off-the-field differences and play as one mean double play unit on their company softball team? Well, only if Kip can offer Lisa a contract for, say...\$5 million. Bwahahahaaa!*

*Author's second note: Truth be told...Kip and Lisa have been good friends for many years...nothing could really dissolve their friendship, except, well, if Kip did become a Yankee's fan....which is where the author draws the line.*

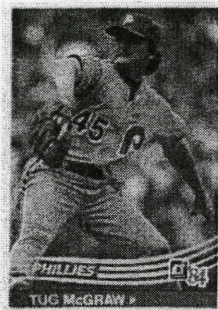


Kip and Lisa in Happier Times



# Ya Gotta Bereave by John Weber

Some people aren't supposed to age—or die. Like **Captain Kangaroo**. Or **Johnny Cash**. And certainly not **Tug McGraw**. Unbelievably, at least to the people of Philadelphia, the Tugger left this playing field on January 6th, 2004, at the way-too-young age of 59 after a ten-month-battle with a brain tumor.



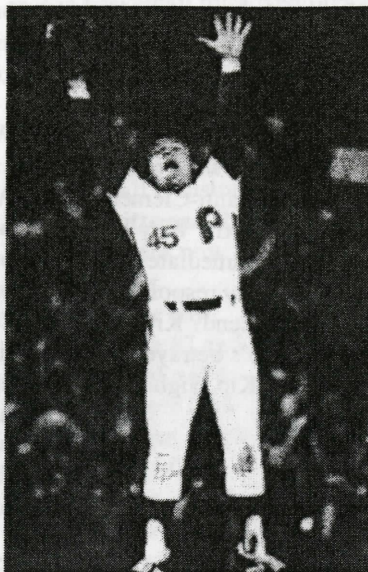
I've been fortunate enough to see the life and career of Frank Edwin "Tug" McGraw from almost all perspectives. As a young, pennant-starved Phillies fan who watched Tug strike out **Willie Wilson** for the last out of the 1980 World Series, still the last Phillies world championship to date. As a colleague who produced Phillies baseball on the radio while Tug was

a popular TV feature reporter. As a journalist who interviewed Tug on his life and times. And even as a member of Tug's extended "family." The family of Phillies fans who truly loved and appreciated this man's warmth, humor and dedication, the family who still finds the fact that Tug is gone just unbelievable.

Why did we love Tug so much? The World Series win? Sure, but **Mike Schmidt** sure isn't loved like Tug, and he had a little something to do with that championship as well. Neither is **Steve Carlton** nor **Manny Trillo** nor **Garry Maddox**, all important pieces of that '80 squad. What made Tug stand out?

It was the twinkle in his eye. His banging his right thigh with his glove after a tough out. His exaggerated sighs of relief and patting his chest after wiggling out of a tough jam (and he sure LOVED to load the bases.). Tug also worked his tail off on that mound, pitching through pain, through injuries, through overuse, through just about everything, especially in '80. If there's one thing that Philadelphia likes to see in their sports heroes, it's seeing them sweat. We wanna *see* the effort. Mike Schmidt was never fully embraced by the Philly fans because he made everything look easy. We didn't see Schmitty sweat. Tugger, meanwhile, was usually drenched, and, most times, with a smile on his face.

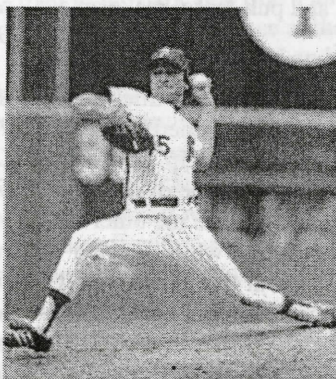
And the things Tug would do for a laugh. There are so many moments, enough to fill the pages of this entire



magazine and then some. For instance, in his first spring training as a Phillie, Tugger entered a game on St. Patrick's Day...in a Phils uniform he had dyed green! Although the green uni didn't go over well with the umpires, they let him keep the green hat. That started a tradition of the Phils wearing green caps every March 17th and auctioning them off for charity afterward. The day **Elvis Presley**

died, the team was in Montreal closing out a series with the Expos. Tug showed up in the locker room with a complete Elvis outfit—right down to the hair. He then proceeded to wear the outfit on the flight to Chicago after the game! That started another tradition—Tug did his Elvis dress-up every year after that on the anniversary of the King's death.

There was one last standout public moment in the life of Tug McGraw. It was the final day in the life of Veterans Stadium. My dad and I went to the game together. It was a day filled with memories. After the game, there were a few things planned that would ensure the old girl's final day was long remembered. Like a parade of players, in uniform, from all of the teams that had competed in the Vet's history. All the players were introduced, one by



one. The 1980 team came out. No McGraw. I had heard from my friends at the Phillies that, despite public proclamations to the contrary, Tug was not doing well at all, and they weren't sure he would make it to Christmas. I told my dad this, and concluded that he wasn't feeling well enough to participate.



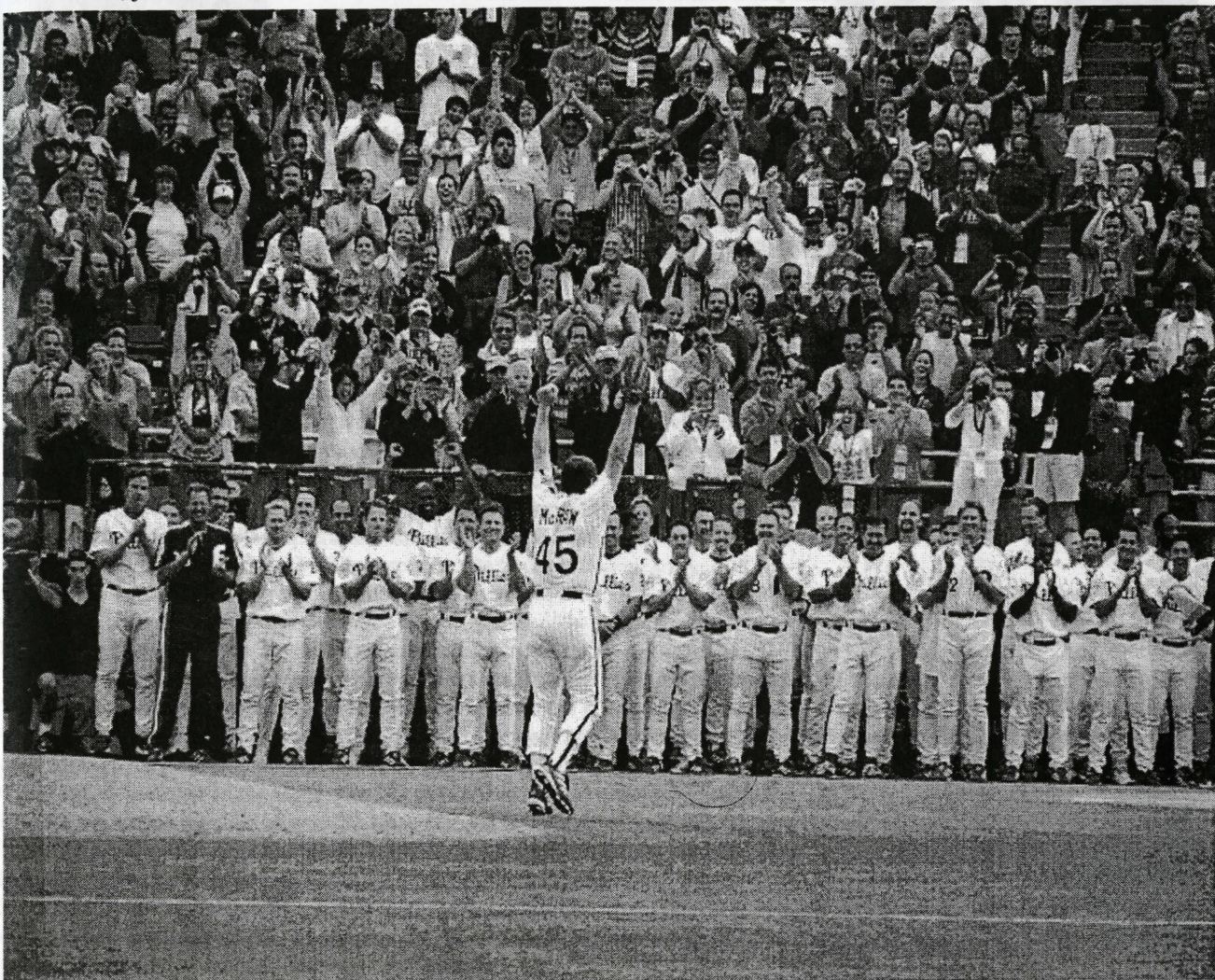
After the player parade, the fans were promised three reenactments of memorable moments in Phillies history. Steve Carlton stepped to the mound and pretended to throw a record-breaking strikeout. Mike Schmidt stepped to the plate again, slammed his 500th home run all over again, and circled the bases (although he did the actual deed in Pittsburgh). And then...a black sedan suddenly appeared next to the Phillies bullpen, cruising slowly toward the infield. The cheers were deafening as everyone in the park knew who was in that car. As Frank Edwin Tug McGraw exited that car between home and first and strode toward the mound, it really was 1980 again. He pitched from the stretch. The Vet was pandemonium. Tug threw that final imaginary pitch. An imaginary Willie Wilson missed it again. And Tug leapt into the air, just like he did on that incredible night. And

as he came back to earth, every player from every Phillies team taking part in the day rushed toward him, engulfing him in a sea of red pinstripes, hugging him, patting him on the back, just trying to touch him, to grab a piece of magic.

It was another Tug McGraw memory no one in Philadelphia would ever forget.

Thanks, Tug, for everything you did—on the field and off.

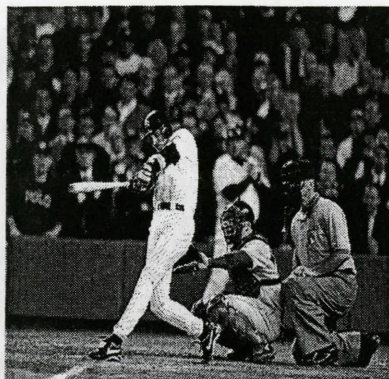
*John Weber produced Phillies baseball on radio for six years, including the grand and glorious World Series year of 1993, six of the best years of his life so far, and has attended every World Series involving the Phils in his lifetime (that would be three).*





# The Most Exciting Event in All of Sports by Jonnie Whoa Oh

Excitement shouldn't be measured in just a moment, but rather in the collective amount of time spent thinking, wishing and hoping surrounding any sporting event. The most dramatic event all of sports has to be the Giants/Bills Super Bowl of 1991. I've never see so many people hold their breath as when the fateful kick went up; yet the other 59 minutes and 56 seconds of the game wasn't



anywhere nearly as exciting. Similarly, **Aaron Boone's** walk off homer was dramatic, but nowhere nearly as exciting for me as the prospect of what Red Sox vs. the Yankees will mean this season.

When October is all said and done, I'm constantly thinking, wishing, hoping, agonizing, postulating and commiserating over every deal, proposed deal, and rejected deal that takes place during the MLB off-season. The MLB off-season is probably more exciting than the first two months of the actual regular season (outside of opening day, it's nice to see the Tigers in first) in the sense that you are projecting lineups, sizing up rivals, proposing trades, being laughed at and then proven right and making outlandish predictions that are irrefutable (go on and wax poetic on how the Mets aren't going to lose a single game all year, I mean as of March 1st they haven't lost one yet!). At the heart of all this excitement lies uncertainty, because nothing is certain in the off-season.

This off-season showed us that nothing should be unexpected. Who among us can honestly say they weren't riveted by each and every 5:00 PM deadline set by either Boston or Texas? I know I visited ESPN.com and their stupid expanding/shrinking advertising box every hour on the hour in hopes of any miniscule crumb of information. Then when it seemed that the game's best player was going nowhere, he ended up on a team that already has an All Star/Gold Glove shortstop. There were some other deals that changed the landscape of the game like **Schilling** packing his bags for Boston, **Pettitte**, the Yankee for life, in Houston and bringing his best friend and retired head hunter with him (an aside—Dear all Mets

pitchers, if and when **Mr. Clemens** bats at Shea Stadium, walk him on four pitches, four very inside pitches, each and every time he is up. Thank you in advance). The beauty of the off-season is even if your team doesn't have the mega bucks to sign anyone they desire, they can be involved through trades like the Phillies did with **Billy Wagner** or through having the Yankees take aging super stars off their hands at a premium—ahem, **Kevin Brown**, ahem. So every team is constantly in the mix and you never know what could happen. Think about it—the fate of your team and the sport is forged and tempered every waking second and sometimes when you aren't even awake thanks to the Japanese teams! The Hot Stove needs to be monitored even more diligently than a real stove!

If all this wasn't enough with the active players, you see the Hall of Fame voting which stirs up even more debate and excitement. Is **Rose** in, is he out? Will **Keith Hernandez** ever get the recognition he deserves? Or how about **Rich Gossage**, **Andre Dawson**, **Bert Blyleven**, **Ryne Sandburg** or **Dale Murphy**? These debates will go on indefinitely until each of those players are actually inducted. Mix in some controversy about steroids and now every stat is up for debate!

Granted this off-season was more exciting than most, but even it when it's not, it's still better than those boring blow out Super Bowls of years passed. And the ho-hum NBA Finals that the West easily walks away with. At the most fundamental level there are only two teams competing in these situations, while from November until the end of March all 30 MLB teams are active! That's 15 times the excitement! In a Super Bowl there are roughly five or 10 star players involved, in the off season every star player is involved!

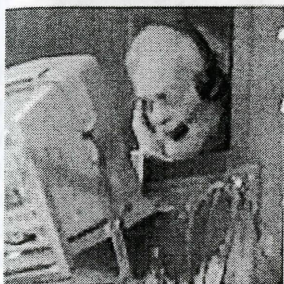
So, keep your Olympics, your NCAA tournaments, your Super Bowls, even your World Serieses (assuming it's Yankees/Braves and I'm in a lose lose situation) and give me the most exciting event in all of sports, MLB's off-season.

*Jonnie Whoa Oh runs Whoa Oh Records, a pop punk label and plays bass in **The Steinways**, a pop punk band. He vividly remembers **Gary Carter's** home run over the Green Monster in Game Four of the 1986 World Series and thinking that Carter was a God amongst men.*



# The King of the Bay Area by Sara Dierck

In my kitchen in San Francisco I had a little red radio that I would listen to when I was cooking. It always had *Pet Sounds* in the CD tray and was tuned to KFRC, AM 610. KFRC was not only the best oldies station I'd ever listened to, it was also home to Oakland A's baseball, and the voice of **Bill King**. Now that I live in New York City, one of the things I miss most about the Bay Area (and I can go on and on about the weather, cheap burritos, and left-minded politics) is hearing the A's games called by King.



The radio announcer for the Athletics since 1981, King's voice must bring back memories of their youth for many Bay Area sports fans. For me, it was a relief from the awful announcers for the Seattle Mariners (I'm originally from Tacoma and grew up a Mariners fan). My

family and I would shake our heads and sometimes turn off the volume of the TV while watching the game. Thus far, my experience in New York with those who call games (especially the Yankees) has been equally frustrating.

The Bay Area is blessed with great announcers. Anyone who has heard **Mike Krukow** and **Duane Kuiper** (known as Kruk and Kuip) call a Giants game has laughed about "elephant ears," the phrase "meat" referring to fans and players alike and the free usage of the telestrator. And everyone would have preferred Giants broadcaster **Jon Miller** to call the World Series games instead of the dull voices of **Joe Buck** and **Tim McCarver**. But my team is the Oakland A's, and the gravelly-voiced King, the creator of "Holy Toledo," my preferred delivery man of baseball.

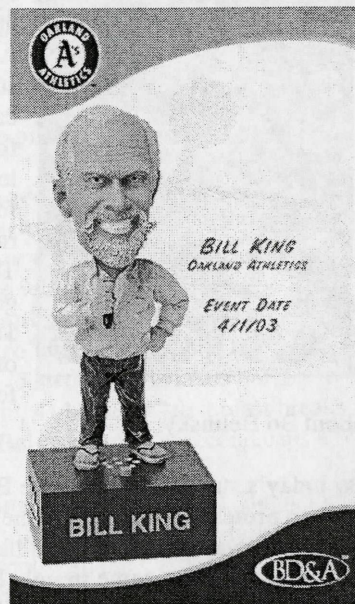
When I wasn't in my kitchen, in front of a television (where **Ray Fosse** and the now dismissed **Greg Papa** aren't too shabby themselves), or actually at the Coliseum, I always had my walkman to catch the game. Luckily enough, I worked in a photo lab darkroom where I didn't have to talk to anyone, unless they wanted to know the score. I was walking up Pierce toward Oak Street when one of my favorite King stories happened. It was April, and the A's were playing the Angels. King had

been commenting on the immense size of the Molina brothers, in particular the size of their uniforms, when the equally enormous Angel **Shawn Wooten** strolled to the plate. "Do you think Wooten could get into Molina's pants?" King asked. Followed by some chuckles, and a "Wait...that didn't come out right."

King is never shy to express his opinions, especially about inter-league play, which is when he takes a vacation every year. It's fitting that someone who has such a classic voice would cringe at a new baseball format. And, after an A's defeat, King seems just as disappointed as you do during the post-game wrap-up.

There's also something to like about a guy who has the seniority to do television but prefers to do radio. I heard King once say that he didn't like to go on television because he'd have to worry about how he looked, and that when he was the Golden State Warriors play-by-play guy, they had someone else introduce the game on screen so that King didn't have to. Not to mention the fact that King had and has a moustache and beard, uncommon for the day (he described himself as looking like a "Bolshevik" to some people). But baseball is one of those sports that while nice to see, is just as great to hear. And King's voice has become part of A's baseball for me.

I wish that I had one of those Bill King bobblehead dolls that were made after the A's 20 game winning streak. It's a talking bobblehead with some of King's calls, including the one after **Scott Hatteburg's** game winner. Then, when I'm forced to listen to Yankees' announcers when they match up with the A's, I can imagine more easily the voice that I'm missing. They may have knishes at games in New York, but they don't have veggie dogs (section 123), The Big Three or Bill King.





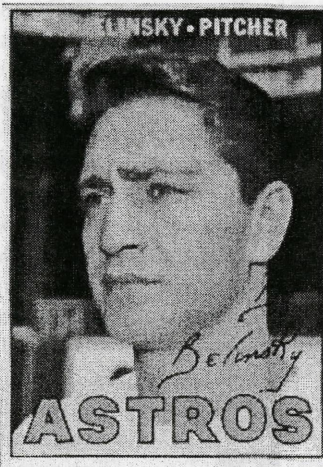
# Bo Belinsky: Ladies Man Supreme by Tim Hinely

I guess the closest thing we have to a ladies man these days is New York Yankees party boy **Derek Jeter**, which is pretty sad when you think about it (Jeter's a dick) but no one, and I mean no one, talked the talk and walked the walk like **Robert "Bo" Belinsky**.



Bo was born in New York City on December 7th, 1936 but raised in Trenton, New Jersey. He made his major league debut on April 18th, 1962, but other than pitching a no-hitter in his rookie year of 1962, Belinsky had a rather unimpressive

major league career. He played for five teams in his eight-year career and his career record was 28-51. His best year was that first year when he went 10-11, hardly the numbers of a Hall of Famer, but this guy was a legend for a different reason. Ol' Bo could have any woman he wanted—and usually did. Did this make his teammates envious? Hell yes, but Bo didn't care. In fact, there wasn't much he did care about save for getting some tail at the end of the night.



In the early 1960's baseball moved out to California and one of the upstart teams was the Los Angeles Angels, which started up in 1961. Bo's career began the following year and, as legend has it, he held out for more money in his rookie year (Imagine that! The balls on this kid!) and got \$8500 instead of the \$6000 they initially offered him. This got the folks in la-la land talking

about Bo Belinsky.

By today's standards, a guy like Bo Belinsky would have women protesting his every game. But back then he could get away with comments like, "I think whores got a lot more class than some straight broads. You know where you stand with them" and "I have one rule about broads, they gotta come highly recommended." Other pitchers, like **Sandy Koufax** to name one, had oodles

more talent but didn't get the kinds of headlines that Bo did merely because they didn't drive a flashy candy-apple red Cadillac Eldorado or party all night at such L.A. hotspots like the Whiskey a Go-Go. Bo had the good looks and the attitude, that, "I don't give a shit" attitude that, for some odd reason, acts as a magnet for some women.



And the women—there were lots of them: *Gilligan's Island* cutie Ginger, otherwise known as **Tina Louise** (Bo said, "Great body,

great legs...hell of a broad"), **Ann-Margaret** ("She wasn't quite as good looking or as sexy in person as she was on screen"), **Connie Stevens** ("Great girl but I wound up dating her 19-year-old cousin"), and many others like **Juliet Prowse**, **Doris Duke** and **Paulette Goddard**. But his best known romance was with Hollywood cheesecake pin-up/post **Marilyn Monroe** bottle-blond **Mamie Van Doren**. Hollywood gossip columnist **Walter Winchell** set them up and they actually hit it off. Legend has it that a sportswriter was interviewing Bo in his hotel room one day while Mamie sat next to them, naked, on the bed ("Greatest interview I ever had" remarked the scribe). They ended up getting engaged and Bo even got her a ring but when reality set in he got cold







feet and called it all off. After more headlines and public fighting Bo got his \$2000 ring back. And while they did get engaged on and off several more times, but they never did get married. In the end Bo made the comment, "I needed her like Custer needed Indians." (Mamie later dated two other baseball players: **Tony Conigliaro** and **Lee Meyers**.)

Bo did eventually get married to **Jo Collins**, the former *Playboy Playmate of the Year* (1965) but the marriage was rocky at best. Bo cheated on Jo every chance he got and then got arrested for threatening her with a gun. He then very nearly killed both of them by crashing his car into a telephone pole and they ended up getting divorced a few years later.



Eventually Bo was sent to the minors in Hawaii. He loved it so much he moved there following his retirement in 1970, and then he faded away. One thing that kept him in the public's mind was sportswriter **Maury Allen**'s book, *Bo: Pitching and Wooing*. In one chapter Allen asked Bo to reveal his secret to pitching that no hitter in his fourth major league game and Bo said, "The night before my no-hitter I bumped into this secretary out on the Strip. She was tall and thin and black haired so we wound up having a couple of drinks and I ended up making it with her at her pad...and I didn't get home until 4:00 am. After having the no-hitter I tried finding her again and never did. She was my good luck charm so when I lost her I lost all of my pitching luck."

In the end Hawaii ended up being a good and bad thing for Bo, as he got off booze and drugs (good) and ended up becoming a born again Christian (not good). Still, the thing that always sticks with me about Bo Belinsky is the comment he made once to former teammate **Albie Pearson** when Albie asked him what he wanted from life

and Bo replied, "To live fast, die young and have a good-looking corpse."

***Tim Hinely** loves the Pittsburgh Pirates and lives in Portland, Oregon. He has been publishing his own zine, **Dagger**, for several years now. Send him \$3.50 to see a copy to: PO Box 820102 Portland, OR 97282-1102 or write at: [daggerboy@prodigy.net](mailto:daggerboy@prodigy.net).*

### **Bo Belinsky's Career "Highlights"**

**May 5, 1962:** Angels rookie Belinsky pitches a no-hitter against the Orioles, the organization from which the cocky lefty was drafted the previous year. Belinsky has nine strikeouts and beats **Steve Barber** 2-0.

**May 11, 1962:** Belinsky wins his fifth straight as the Angels beat the White Sox, 4-2. He strikes out 11.

**June 26, 1962:** **Earl Wilson** pitches a no-hitter, his first major league shutout, as Boston beats the Los Angeles Angels 2-0. He also hits a home run off losing pitcher Belinsky, who threw his no-hitter six weeks earlier.

**September 6, 1962:** Commissioner **Ford Frick** announces that any transfer of Belinsky to the Athletics as part of the **Dan Osinski** deal will be voided due to a technicality in the rules.

**September 19, 1963:** At Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, 476 lonely fans watch the Angels and Orioles game. The Angels win, 7-2, behind Belinsky.

**August 14, 1964:** Belinsky is suspended by the Angels after attacking sportswriter **Braven Dyer**. Four days later Belinsky is assigned to Hawaii (Pacific Coast League), then suspended for the season when he refuses to report.

**December 3, 1964:** The Angels unload Belinsky to the Phillies for minor-league pitcher **Rudy May** and 1B **Costen Shockley**.

**April 20, 1966:** **Hank Aaron** clouts homers 399 and 400 to lead the Braves to a victory, 8-1, over the Phillies. The first shot is off starter **Ray Culp** in the 1st inning, and number 400 comes in the 9th inning, off Belinsky.

**June 25, 1967:** **Ernie Banks** slams two two-run homers to back rookie **Joe Niekro**'s three-hitter, and the Cubs win 8-0 over the Astros to sweep. Bill Hands hurls a five-hitter in the opener to win, 4-1. Banks' first blast breaks up a pitching duel with Belinsky and his second caps a five-run 7th.

**August 18, 1968:** Pitching for Hawaii (PCL), Belinsky twirls a no-hitter, defeating Tacoma 1-0. He fails the next year in a comeback attempt with the Cardinals.

**February 2, 1970:** The Pirates trade Belinsky to the Reds for **Dennis Ribant**. Belinsky pitches in only three games for the Reds before retiring to Hawaii.



# The Oddball Events of 2003 by John Shiffert

Strange events in baseball come in many shapes and sizes. Some take place on the field. Others, off the field. Some evoke a feeling of déjà vu. Others leave you wondering, "How in the world did that happen," or saying "That'll never happen again in a million years." (Want to bet? Oops, can't say that...there's no betting in baseball.) In that regard, the 2003 season was no different than the 150 or so odd campaigns that proceeded it. So, let's take a look at the *Oddball Events of 2003*, and see if they're any odder than some of baseball's past strange occurrences.



The fun this past season actually started in Spring Training, when Padres pitcher **Jay Witasick** got hurt taking out the garbage. Although that escapade earned Witasick the *Injury of the Year Award*, it's unlikely he'll be seen singing "I Love Trash" anytime soon. Now, while there haven't

been many other trash-related injuries in baseball (unless they were the end result of trash talking), Witasick certainly isn't the first person to get hurt in an unusual manner—remember when **Wade Boggs** broke a rib falling on to a couch while trying to put on a pair of cowboy boots? Or, the day **George Metkovich** got his nickname, by getting speared in the foot by a catfish he had just landed on a fishing expedition? So, at least Witasick has company in the odd injury category.

However, there is simply no matching what has to stand as *THE Oddball Event of 2003: On the Field Division*. It took place on July 9, in Milwaukee's Miller Park, proving, at least for one day, that the Brew Crew made headlines for something other than ineptitude on the field.



**Randall Simon** of the Pirates became, to the best of anyone's knowledge, the first major

leaguer to attack a seven-foot Italian Sausage with a baseball bat between innings. (Actually, it was during a smoked meat footrace...the daily highlight of Brewers' home games, and a tribute to Miller Park's fine knockwurst.) And, to get suspended for three games for same.

There has since been much speculation as to the possible reason for the Simon Sausage Slashing...some of which you may not have heard previously...

- ◆ He thought the offending link was mocking the Pittsburgh team's former nickname. In 1887, when they first jumped from the American Association to the National League, the Pittsburgh team wore gaudy blue and black striped uniforms, leading some sportswriters to call them the "Smoked Italians." (No, I'm not making this up.)

- ◆ Simon thought that **John Rocker** had taken up a new career, dressing as a sausage and running through ballparks (he might as well, he certainly can't pitch anymore). In case you've forgotten, Rocker was thought to have been referring to Simon in his "fat monkey" comment in his infamous Off-the-Rocker *Sports Illustrated* interview.

- ◆ Since he was dressed all in bright yellow (the Pirates' hideous late '70s retro unis), Simon was just trying to put some mustard on the hot dog in the race, and missed.

- ◆ He knew the person in the Sausage outfit was a young woman, and, caveman-style, he was trying to get a date.

- ◆ Since Simon is 6-0 and about 250 pounds, and the game was running long, he wanted to spear a snack with his bat.

- ◆ Finally, since Simon's career Strikeout/Walk ratio is 2:1, he'll clearly swing at anything.

Now, that's not to say there haven't been plenty of other equally odd happenings in baseball over the years, even within the Mascot Category. For instance, there was the time in 1978 when the San Diego Chicken almost caused a riot in Veterans Stadium by practically molesting the Phillies' pin-up ballgirl, **Mary Sue Styles**, on the field before a game.

And while we're speaking about assaults, the most famous event took place on May 15, 1912, when **Ty Cobb** went into the stands in Hilltop Park in New York and attacked **Claude Lueker**, a crippled Tammany Hall



flunky ("He has no hands," someone in the stands called out. "I don't care if he has no feet," answered Cobb) with a vile tongue. What's not commonly known about this event, according to **Ron Cobb**—no, I don't know if he's a relative—is that the two protagonists knew each other, and there was already bad blood between them from earlier contretemps down South.

Here's what Cobb (Ron, that is) had to say about the fracas: "Lueker and Cobb had a long running feud from down south, and Cobb selected Lueker to pounce on because he recognized him when he jumped into the stands." Cobb (Ron again) even provides a quote from the February 27, 1913, *Cincinnati Times-Star* on the subject...

"Tyrus Cobb may have a rocky session or two when he visits New York this summer. The man he walloped that fateful day on the bleachers has not forgotten or forgiven—I know, because I know him and have talked with him. By the way... little attention...was paid to the fact that his famous fracas was only part of an old Southern feud, entirely disconnected with base ball. Long ago Cobb and Claude Lueker, who received the wallops, were Georgia boys, and never harmonized, having many fights and contracting a strong personal enmity."

Actually, no direct quote of what Lueker said has survived, so we'll speculate that maybe he was singing (to the tune of "Dixie")...

"Oh, I wish I was in the land of cotton.  
I smell you, and you smell rotten.  
Get away, get away, get away...  
you stink!"

Maybe... hey, this is a family magazine!

And then there's June 30, 1959, a day that will go down in history for unintentional low comedy on the diamond. The Cardinals are playing the Cubs at Wrigley Field. **Bob Anderson** is on the mound, pitching to **Stan Musial** in the top of the fourth. A 3-1 pitch gets by catcher **Sammy Taylor**, who,



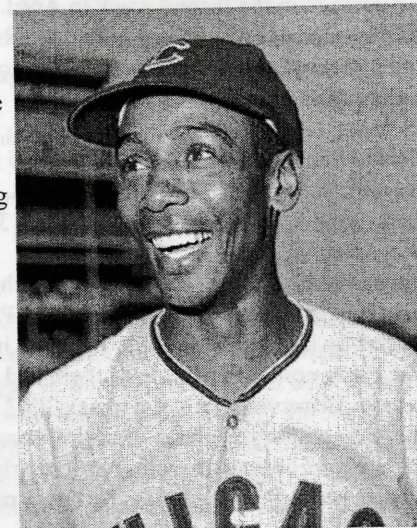
instead of pursuing the ball (while Musial is heading to first, and subsequently second) stops to argue with umpire **Vic Delmore**, claiming the ball hit Musial's bat. Meanwhile, despite the fact that no one has called "time," the Cubs' batboy gives the ball to famed PA announcer **Pat Pieper** (who sat right next to the field) just before Cubs' third baseman **Alvin Dark** arrives on the scene to

retrieve same in an attempt to prevent Musial from getting three bases on a walk (was Stan the Man great... going for a triple on a walk). He guns the ball down to **Ernie Banks** in the neighborhood of second base. With "time" still not having been called or granted, the harried Delmore, still at home plate, does the unthinkable... he pulls out ANOTHER ball, and plops it in Anderson's glove, at just about the same time Dark makes his throw from way behind the plate. Anderson, seeing The Man on the basepaths, guns the new ball towards second base, only to have it go into center field. **Stanley Frank**, seeing this ball sail by him, lights out for third, only to run into future fellow Hall of Famer Banks, who is holding the original ball.

After a 10-minute argument featuring extended legal briefs from all parties involved (can you imagine what would have happened if this was 10 years later, and **Leo Durocher** was the Cubs' manager?), Musial is called out. Well, Banks DID tag him with the original ball. Cards' manager **Solly Hemus** (a notorious crybaby, anyway) protests the game, which turns out to be meaningless when the Cards win 4-1.

And you wonder why one of the Cards' broadcasters of that game, **Joe Garagiola**, wrote a book called, *Baseball is a Funny Game*...

There were, of course, other funny (or strange or oddball) events in 2003.





How can you explain the continuing complete loss of control by the Cardinals' one-time top pitching prospect? Yes, **Rick Ankiel** still has **Steve Blass Disease**. In 54 innings of Double A ball in 2003 he walked 49, hit six batters and threw 10 wild pitches and ran up a 6.29 ERA.

Also in the *Strange Pitching Feats* category, were the happenings in the second week in April. Three of the best pitchers in baseball—**Greg Maddux**, **Randy Johnson** and **Pedro Martinez**—all suffered historic shellings within three days of each other.

Pedro - 4 1/3 IP, 9 H, 10 R/ER, 4 BB, 5 SO  
The Big Unit - 4 2/3 IP, 10 H, 10 R/ER, 2 BB, 4 SO  
Mad Dog - 5 2/3 IP, 12 H, 10 R, 7 ER, 3 BB, 7 SO

At least Maddux had the excuse of pitching against a team that had **Jim Thome** in the lineup (the Phillies.) Pedro got blitzed by the Orioles and the Big Unit by the Brewers. One thing none of the three of them had was an injury excuse. However, that's not to say 2003 didn't have other interesting injury angles. For some reason, there was an epidemic of oblique muscle injuries early in the year—10 players sent to the DL in less than two months...

March 19 - **Dan Wilson**, C, Mariners  
March 21 - **Kevin Mench**, OF, Rangers  
March 21 - **Carlos Beltran**, OF, Royals  
March 26 - **Ben Broussard**, 1B, Indians  
April 1 - **Jason Michaels**, OF, Phillies

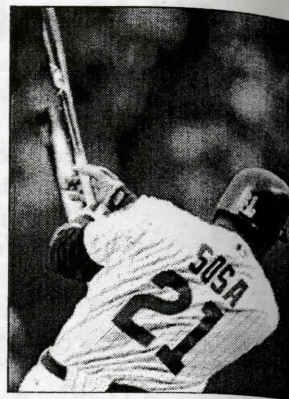
After the season started, there was a two-week hiatus before the oblique bug bit again (it's worth noting that only nine players were disabled with oblique injuries during all of 2002)...

April 17 - **Jeff Cirillo**, 3B, Mariners  
April 20 - **Josh Fogg**, P, Pirates  
April 29 - **Chad Fox**, P, Red Sox  
May 2 - **Rodrigo Lopez**, P, Orioles  
May 5 - **Stephen Randolph**, P, Diamondbacks

Now, maybe you consider the **Sammy Sosa** corked bat incident a minor affair, or a major faux pas. In either case, it was hardly unique. For instance, in August 1923, **Babe Ruth** was caught using a bat that was actually four different pieces of wood glued together. And not only that, but when **Dave Henderson** had a chance to examine another Ruthian bat in 1983, he noticed that the round end of the bat didn't match the wood of the barrel of the bat.

"That's a plug," said Hendu. "This bat is corked."

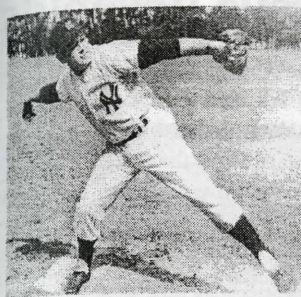
Actually, altering bats is an old and (dis?)honored baseball tradition. Here's a very brief list of some of the other players who have been identified with souped-up bats: **Albert Belle**, **Billy Hatcher** (superballs), **Ken Williams** (maybe the first to cork a bat), **George Sisler** (he drove nails in his bat, and filed off the ends), **Norm Cash** ("I owe my 1961 batting title to my hollow bats," he is supposed to have said), **Graig Nettles** (he also used superballs), **Amos Otis** and **Wilton Guerrero**.



And then came the post season... and we were treated to a seemingly unending parade of strange happenings. Now, I don't believe in curses, whether at the behest of the greatest baseball player of all time or an aggrieved goat owner. And yet...you could almost see it coming on the evening of October 14, 2003. Almost 74 years to the day from the biggest disaster in World Series history, the 2003 Cubs saw history repeat itself...blowing a shutout, and a seemingly safe lead, late in a key postseason game. In 1929, in the bottom of the seventh, **Charlie Root** had the A's just as much under control as **Mark Prior** had the Marlins, only then it was an 8-0 lead and just nine outs to go before the Cubbies would even the Series at two games apiece. As you probably know, the Athletics dropped a 10-spot on the Cubs. Even worse, both Cubs teams, in addition to giving up the two biggest innings in post season history, were absolutely squashed by a steamroller that was rolling mainly through improbable circumstances. (Of course, it doesn't help to have **Dusty Baker** deciding when and when not to change pitchers.) In 1929, it was **Hack Wilson** misplaying two catchable balls into a single and a home run. In 2003, it was **Steve Bartman** getting his grubby paws on a foul ball, and **Alex Gonzalez** failing to get his paws on a fair ball.

And then, two nights later, things got really weird, when the Red Sox saw 1949 repeat itself. The Yankees had led the Sox all that year, holding a 12 game lead in July. However, Yankee injuries and the Sox' two pitching aces, **Mel Parnell** and **Ellis Kinder**, closed the gap and Boston actually had a one game lead going into the final two games of the year which, as fate would have it, were at





Yankee Stadium. Game one, on October 1, put **Allie Reynolds** against Parnell. The Sox chased a wild Indian early in the game and took a 4-0 lead in the third inning.

(When's the last time the Sox had a 4-0 lead early in a key game? Gee, seems like just last October.) However, the Sox' 25-game winner faltered a little in the middle innings, and manager Joe

McCarthy (yes, the same Joe McCarthy who kept shuffling pitchers in and out for the Cubs on October 12, 1929... I told you this was going to be weird...)

pulled him in the fifth for **Joe Dobson** (whose ERA was more than a run higher than Parnell's) to get the platoon advantage... the Yankees promptly tied it at 4. With two outs in the bottom of the eighth, the Yankees' fifth outfielder, **Johnny Lindell**, who would hit all of six dingers on the year, pulled a Dobson fastball down the left field line (where else?) for what would prove to be the game winner. At least it wasn't a knuckleball. (In case you're interested, **Aaron Boone** hit six home runs for the Yankees during the regular season.)

It gets better. Or worse, if you're a Red Sox fan. The last game of 1949, on October 2, with the two teams tied, pitted the Yankees' **Vic Raschi** (a pure power pitcher who liked to throw close to hitters... clearly, **Roger Clemens** was his stand-in) against the Sox' **Ellis Kinder** (who, although he could throw hard, was an excellent and deceptive slider/change-up pitcher as well... and who liked to throw at hitters... hmmm, **Pedro**). Just two of the best pitchers in the AL going head-to-head with the season on the line, that's all. Kinder, trailing 1-0 in the top of the eighth, was lifted for a pinch hitter (by Joe McCarthy, of course), and the Yankees scored four times in the bottom half of the inning off of Parnell and **Tex Hughson**. The key blow? A bases-loaded pop fly double by **Jerry Coleman** that drove in three runs to make the score 5-0. (He had an extra RBI on **Jorge Posada** in the deal.) The Sox came back to score three times in the top of the ninth, but it was too late and the Yankees won 5-3.

As hard as it may be to believe, those weren't the biggest flukes of the postseason...the biggest fluke was the Marlins (Marlins, fish, flukes... get it?) winning the World

Series despite the Yankees leading them in every offensive and pitching category. And, of course, THAT had already happened to the Yankees once before as well, in 1960, when they absolutely slaughtered the Pirates, outscoring them 55-27, and still lost in seven games:

	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	W	K	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS
1960 Pirates	234	27	60	11	0	4	26	12	26	.256	.293	.355	.648
1960 Yankees	269	55	91	13	4	10	54	18	40	.338	.380	.528	.908

The Yankees managed to top the Pirates in every offensive category (except that they struck out more than the Pirates)...just like what happened in the just-past World Series:

	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	W	K	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS
2003 Marlins	203	17	47	8	0	2	17	14	48	.232	.281	.300	.581
2003 Yankees	207	21	54	10	1	6	21	22	49	.261	.332	.406	.738

Finally, a couple of statistical oddities. It was a bad year to be a pitcher named **Franklin. Ryan** of the Mariners led the American League in home runs allowed, with 34, and **Wayne** of the Brewers topped that, leading the National League in home runs allowed with 36. And then, there was **Joe Kennedy**, an otherwise innocuous 3-12 pitcher for Tampa Bay. Kennedy went out on May 2, 2003 and threw a one-hit, one-walk, six-strikeout shutout at the sorry Detroit Tigers. A fine game, running up a Game Score (**Bill James'** method of ranking the quality of a pitcher's start) of 90, a mark good enough to tie for the AL lead for the best Game Score of 2003. However, that's not what makes Kennedy so remarkable. His claim to fame is that, in his very next start, on May 7, he was pounded by the Minnesota Twins for 13 hits and 10 runs—all earned—in just four innings. Thus, in consecutive starts, we learn that Mr. Kennedy posted the best Game Score of the 2003 AL season (90) and then the WORST Game Score of the 2003 AL season (-5). Way to go, Joe.

*John Shiffert is a member of the Society for Baseball Research (SABR), the former publisher of the Philadelphia Baseball File (1989-1991), the former Sports Information Director for Earlham College (1973-1974) and Drexel University (1975-1979) and a sportswriter of some 35 years experience, starting in high school in Philadelphia. Every week Shiffert (a baseball historian and **Phillies** fan living in exile outside of Atlanta) looks at a timely event from baseball's history and ties it into a event or news story from today's headlines in his free e-zine, 19 to 21 ([www.baseball19to21.com](http://www.baseball19to21.com)).*



# Hot Stove, Cool Music, Great Cause by Steve Reynolds

One side of Major League Baseball usually gets overlooked in all the chatter about high salaries, performance-enhancing drug use and where the Expos may end up—many organizations head up great charitable efforts. Major League Baseball itself has provided funding for Boys and Girls Clubs around the country for almost a decade and runs Baseball Tomorrow, which provides equipment and uniforms to youth baseball leagues. The Mets, led by players like **Al Leiter** and **John Franco**, are involved with 22 community-outreach programs throughout the metropolitan area. And both the Mets and the Yankees were tremendous supporters of post-9/11 needs.

But the longest-running and best-known baseball charity is Boston's Jimmy Fund. Anyone that grew up in (or in my case, near) New England will remember ushers in their local movie theater collecting for the fund each summer. The Jimmy Fund was started in 1948 by the Variety Club of New England. The club organized a radio broadcast from the bedside of a young cancer patient dubbed Jimmy as he was visited by members of the Boston Braves baseball team. Contributions poured in to buy Jimmy a television set so he could watch the Braves play. The fund truly got off the ground the next year with the theater collection program.

When the Braves moved to Milwaukee, the owners of the Red Sox took on the major support of the fund by naming it the team's official charity. Ever since then the team has raised money for the fund, which has helped numerous young people battle cancer for more than 50 years. And the Red Sox players throughout the years have always been big supporters—the 1967 Boston Red Sox “Impossible Dream” team voted to give the Jimmy Fund a share of its winnings from making it to the World Series. (And back then post-season money actually meant something).

In 2000 a new Jimmy Fund benefit came on the scene in Boston—*Hot Stove Cool Music*. The project was hatched by *Boston Herald* sportswriter **Jeff Horrigan** and ESPN baseball guru **Peter Gammons**. The duo had long talked about putting together a benefit. (Gammons—well known for musical references in his columns—says, “I always joke that some people do golf tournaments while I do rock concerts.”) Horrigan was inspired one night after seeing a show where one opening act was named for the late

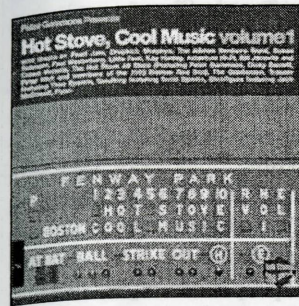
Yankee catcher **Thurman Munson**. Horrigan knew another band called **Carlton Fisk**, and thought a benefit with both bands and other baseball-themed acts would be a great idea. Horrigan called Gammons the next day, and he suggested an auction of baseball memorabilia to fill out the evening.

The first *Hot Stove Cool Music* concert took place in December 2000 at Boston's Paradise Rock Club. The night was headlined by ex-**Letters to Cleo** singer (and big baseball fan) **Kay Hanley**. Gammons served as the evening's MC, and Hanley's bassist **Ed Valauskas** (also from the Boston band **The Gentlemen**) recalls that, “People came out in droves just to hear [Gammons] talk baseball between the bands.” The night was a great success. Valauskas adds, “The end of the evening culminated with an ‘all-star jam’ (in other words, a train wreck) on ‘Surrender’ by **Cheap Trick** featuring Kay and **Nina Gordon** (ex-**Veruca Salt**) on vocals, with neither of them remembering the words to the first verse. It was kinda funny.”

Three more *Hot Stove Cool Music* benefits have happened since 2000, with the last one this past January selling out in no time. “Each year it's just grown a little bit more,” Gammons says. “And this year it's sort of taken on a bit more of a life.” That life Gammons is referring to is *Hot Stove Cool Music: Volume One*, an album filled with a diverse roster of acts with baseball connections. **Pearl Jam** contributes a live version of “Bu\$hleaguer,” which takes on the former Texas Rangers owner-turned politician. Gammons says singer **Eddie Vedder** has always had a baseball and music connection. “He wrote some of his first songs in a little donut shop right across from Wrigley Field.” *Hot Stove* stalwart Hanley contributes “Your Summer Baby,” which is a perfect theme for the boys of summer, while Valauskas and The Gentlemen contribute the appropriately titled “Hit That.”

The disc also features baseball players and employees. **Trauser**, led by Red Sox general manager **Theo Epstein** on guitar, tackles **Neil Young**'s “Rockin’ in the Free World.” **Sandfrog**, the band led by former Angel and current Mariner **Scott Speizio**, and **Stickfigure**, led by ex-pitcher **Jack McDowell**, each contribute original material. Gammons is especially impressed with McDowell's development after his career ended a few years ago. “I think he's evolved into an outstanding musician, and he's

evolved into himself. Which is true of a lot of musicians. You start out sort of copying the people that you idolize, and then you eventually grow into your own personality.”



frontman **Dickey Barrett** and several Red Sox players singing on a cover of **Gary Glitter**'s “Rock and Roll Part One.” “Part Two,” which has no lyrics except for the “hey” chant, is the one that gets played at parks around the country. Valauskas says, “I thought it would be interesting to do the version with lyrics mostly because it is just weird and that not very many people know it.”

Gammons, who played in a band in college, turned from MC to performer at the 2003 benefit. He jokes that his first concert appearance in almost 40 years was made easier by the “great safety net” onstage of The Gentlemen with Janovitz and Eisenstein. That led to Gammons and the Hot Stove All Stars covering **Chuck Berry**'s “Carol” for the album. “Peter was great in the studio,” comments Valauskas. “I was a little surprised only on that he hadn't recorded since 1964. His singing on that track is really good and it didn't take him very long to nail it. Initially it was a little strange backing him up because of the famous person aspect, but that went away pretty quickly. It is a pretty natural fit with the Gentlemen because of the old school rock n' roll thing. Gammons is such a music fan and rock n' roll historian—it is not only a good time playing with the guy but you actually get a music history lesson (as well as some baseball insider info) playing with him.” As for his studio experience, Gammons adds, “I was amazed at how it turned out. I said to Ed at one point, ‘That isn't exactly what I thought I sounded like.’”

For Gammons and company, the goal now is to keep raising money for the Jimmy Fund. A DVD of the 2003 show is in the works for later this year. And a second album is also in the planning stages, with even more baseball and rock connections. “In addition to the Gammons track and the Gary Glitter cover,” Valauskas reveals, “We cut a version of ‘Simple Man’ by **Lynyrd**

**Skynyrd** that we were hoping to get **Tim Wakefield** to come down and sing on but unfortunately, scheduling never allowed it to happen. Maybe we'll get him for the next one.”

Gammons adds that Boston is the perfect place to keep doing this benefit series. “One of the reasons this works so well in Boston is that Boston is America's biggest college town. And it's essentially two things—baseball and rock n' roll. Those are the two biggest things in town. Maybe that's why I love it here so much.”

(To order the album, go to [HotStoveCoolMusic.com](http://HotStoveCoolMusic.com))

**Postscript:** I couldn't let a chance to speak with Peter Gammons go by without asking a couple of regular baseball related questions.

**Zisk:** Who do you think improved the most in the off-season?

**Gammons:** The Phillies. Getting **Billy Wagner** and **Tim Lincecum**—they had pretty good starting pitching. Now they have great starting pitching and a great bullpen. They could be really, really good.

**Zisk:** If **Larry Bowa** has slow start with this team, does that put him in jeopardy after the end of last year.

**Gammons:** Yes, I think they'll be a great deal of pressure because everybody expects him to win.

**Zisk:** What do you think of how the Mets approached the off-season?

**Gammons:** I think that **Jim Duquette** has instituted a philosophy, a philosophy I thought they should have had a long time ago. And that is, “We're not going to go around and get slugging name stars that will please the back pages of the papers. We're going to go out and get players that can adapt to Shea Stadium.” Shea Stadium is one of the worse places to play and hit in baseball. So his idea is to go out and get good defensive players, get pitching and make life miserable for people when they come there. And I think that's the way to be successful, and I think that he's got a plan that has a chance to be really successful. In my mind, you can have **Andruw Jones** and **Tori Hunter** and all the rest of them. In my mind, **Mike Cameron**'s the best centerfielder in the game. They got a great defensive shortstop in **Matsui**, and **Reyes** will be a great second basemen. They started out by really improving the defense in the middle. They're not going to go to first place in one year, but for once they have a plan, which is something they haven't really had in the past, you may have noticed.

**Zisk:** Yes, yes I have. (Laughs)



# Apes and Angels: Contemporary Baseball Fiction And My Century of Misery

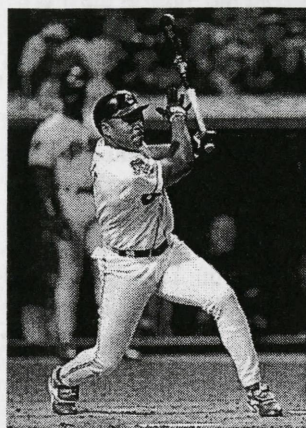
By Michael Baker

"Did Cartwright say that his endeavor was to balance the arithmetic of the game against its geometry? All of sport, from bushkazi to baseball, is man's endeavor to balance his animal instinct against his civilizing intellect. On the sporting field, to borrow Mister Disraeli's phrase, we are both ape and angel."

**Eric Rolfe Greenberg,**  
*The Celebrant*

"Go fuck yourself."

**Albert Belle,** to NBC's *Hannah Storm*



*The Seventh Babe,* **Jerome Charyn,** 1979  
*Shoeless Joe,* **W.P. Kinsella,** 1981  
*The Celebrant,* **Eric Rolfe Greenberg,** 1983  
*The Greatest Slump of All Time,* **David Carkeet,** 1984  
*Blue Ruin,* **Brendan Boyd,** 1991

On April 22nd, 1901, the first game of the American League was played; the Chicago White Sox barely bested my later-to-be-loved Cleveland Indians, 8-2. And if you excuse the unlikely aberrations of the periodic anomaly—**Bagby, Boudreau,** or a **Baerga**—it has been downhill for the Tribe ever since, a ceaseless sadistic and masochistic contortion of cosmic athletic ineptitude, mind-bogglingly bad trades, selfish and preening players, shortsighted and greedy owners, and genius foes: **Cobb, Ruth, Foxx, Greenberg, Williams, Mantle,** and **Killebrew.** The Tribe that year finished 54-82; their clean-up hitter amassed 55 RBI's; their leadoff hitter was **Candy LaChance;** their

sterling reserves included **Zaza, Truck, Shorty,** and **Paddy.** Reading, however, baseball books, staring at muted TV's in decaying bars in downtown Akron, listening to **Herb Score** on the radio, studying statistics, attending games for years in a near-empty stadium, and following, begging with, laughing over and sobbing because of my Cleveland Indians, have made me who I am, or am not: a complete shithead addled loser. And I wouldn't change one called strike three, one late-August delusional hope, one dropped pop fly in the eighth. That absence of glory has become my cursed presence, the scarlet badge of a grinning drunk Indian.

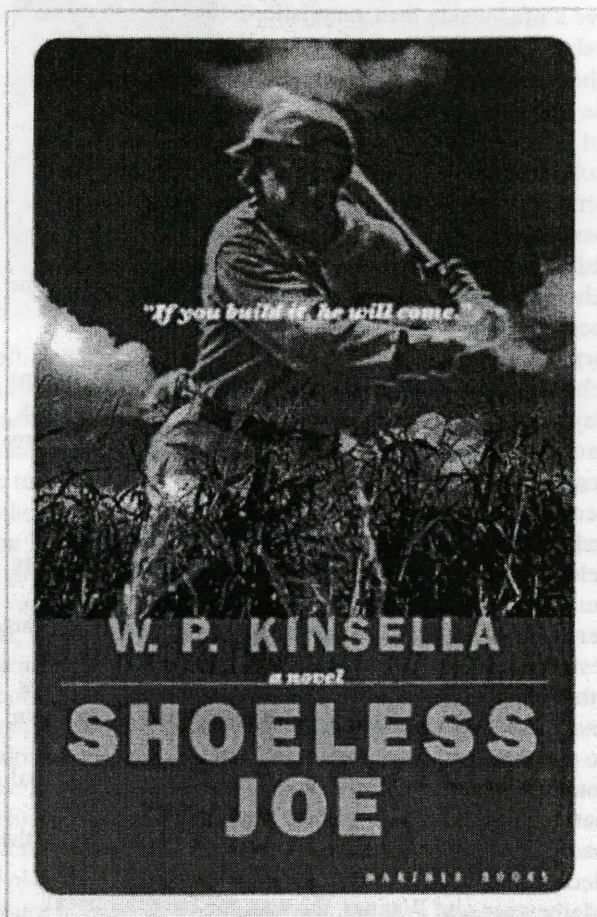
There has been gleaned for me, however, some solace from baseball books. The ever present sense of spring renewal, the recognition of the latent potential in all human endeavor, the timelessness of a seven-run uprising, and the pouring over of stable statistics have called forth many a person, young and old, to whisper their secret fascination with this beautiful charade. And I am drawn to many of them: the dreamy and nostalgic non-fictions of **Angell, Khan, Tygiel** and **Creamer;** the saber-rattling of the hyper-zealous scientists, **James** and **Palmer** and their army of pencil pushers, who compare fielding statistics of Federal League third basemen; and, of course, the myriad fictionists. I prefer the odder ones: the game needs permanent debunkings, especially in opposition to the clichéd media heads or the seasonal comical angst of permanent losers—the Cubs, the Red Sox, and me. Some of the hallowed ones leave me cold, like forced eating of spinach or reading **Tom Wolfe:** they contain the same number of players and dirty jockstraps, but they call attention to their seriousness at every possible 7th inning stretch. **Mark Harris's** "Henry Wiggins" novels are too homey, too winking at me because of their moral superiority. I prefer **Thurber** to **Lardner.** Period. **Malamud**—a great novelist—in his first, *The Natural,* uses many intelligent adjectives and way too many intellectual plot patterns, making me lament the dirt of my neighborhood ball field. **Roth's** *The Great American Novel* blows up because of the comic tantrums, the great fabulist's lack of details and perspiration. Better if one takes the game less mythically, with more immediacy, highlighting failed efforts, heroes in search of empty stadiums.



I prefer the protest and spirit of survival found in the non-Platonic pages of Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association, J. Henry Waugh, Prop.*, in the first third of DeLillo's *Underworld*, and in the tiny men who inhabit their precarious tiny worlds of the five novels listed above. These celebrations and ceremonies, these mysterious powers of lost narrators, the proselytizing characters who know not themselves, seek meaning, structure, and grace from the game. Marcus Aurelius, an opponent of the wild card and designated hitter, wrote that men need "sacrifice...the most primitive, the most natural and enduringly significant of old pagan sacrifices....and veritable consecration." The characters in these books seek also to confirm beliefs: they have instinctive attachments to the order of 27 outs and 60 feet, 6 inches. While self interest, family, community, and the past may be crumbling, the game itself posits a radical morality, a set of codes handed down since Doubleday in hushed, secret conundrums exchanged in bars, dugouts, and hotel rooms. The characters here are anti-capitalists, anti-fascists. Although deeply washed in superstition, racism, provincialism, and hoary abstractions, these men, nonetheless, have predilections for the common, the same, the ordinary, free from the ache of longing. They are not liberated, or patriotic, or concerned with equality: they are ballplayers—adults in child-like games, attracted to patterns, and haters of dazzling interpretations.

These five novels share, besides the obvious, many things: enervated protagonists scarred from past falls, and fearful of future pink slips. They hate the owners; they are not even on firm ground regarding their fearless allies, the spectators. Each of the five novels share a love for the more ancient variety of the sport, when fans could walk up a buy a draught for their heroes; when the same couple thousand fans came to every game; when the salaries, gloves, and home runs were miniscule; when gamblers outnumbered the temperate. Except for Kinsella, whose famous novel became the more famous, and moribundly sanitized, *Field of Dreams*, the novelists here are wary of veteran players enjoying the sunsets from their southern porches, warm gins in their hands, daydreaming of Stonewall Jackson or Walter Johnson. These novels, and Kinsella's, achieve what most great fiction achieves: prickings into our collective consciences; diagrams of failed dreams; a miniaturized and entropic present, harshly counter pointed with the bright promise of spring. The leaders of these fictions are jumpy, sad, seeking the balance between individual glory and collective action. Teamwork is often extolled, and as also with corporate

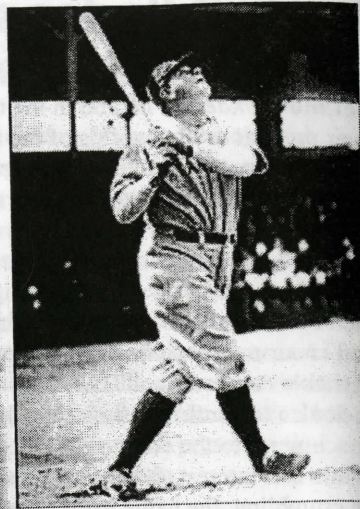
America, iconoclasm is deprecated, caged, but these characters have secret weapons: they play brilliantly with beautiful bodies this game of chance and skill.



*Shoeless Joe*, W.P. Kinsella's superb novel, restrained and tender, is about fathers and sons. Voices tell the narrator, Ray Kinsella, a struggling Iowa farmer, to build a baseball field. Once done, it is inhabited by members of the 1919 Chicago White Sox, architects of that year's World Series scandal and their own dooms. The novel, like *Caesar's Gaul*, is divided into three parts: the voices and the dream and the field; the bonding with another silenced artist, J. D. Salinger, who like *Shoeless Joe Jackson* of the Sox, wonders why he was chosen; and the long coda, where a former player who only got into one game with the Giants and another lost soul who for a half a century has claimed spurious professional experience add colorings of hope and integrity. They all seek reclamation, and they all get to rectify mistakes, or at least live second chances. Much



sports fiction suffers from excessive idolatry, which partially mars this sad and thoughtful book. Bad baseball books, like French operetta or Lake Erie wineries, do not have a life outside their simplistic souls. Here, farming, fresh starts, and fathers take precedent, as the game, although sacred, is played for joy, more pitch and catch, less standing ovations. And the heroes, Jackson, Salinger, and the elder Kinsella are demystified, miniaturized. The strokes of portraiture are swift; the balance between cornball and baseball is taut. This is America: falling apart, isolated, seeking redress for long ago grievances. Although the character of the wife is transparent, and although the morality of gambling is never discussed, the book renders well the dignity of athleticism, the art of narrative making, and the fragile holds to positive delusions. The wicked bankers are beat back, the pristine players welcome all competition, and the narrator fights through his fear and trembling, putting on a glove and re-imagining the not-so-towering image of his father. Because Kinsella's book actually reaches concordance, and because it actually centers around decent people—delusional and felonious, but indefatigably decent—it is quite unlike the other four novels under consideration here. The tone and execution of *Shoeless Joe* is timorous, restrained, plangent in its need for connections. The other four books celebrate chaos and cursing, doldrums and defeats—these multiple tongues can't be shut down, so don't bother inviting the Vicar for tea. Three of the four—excepting Carkeet's novel of team and individual pathological depression—take place near the 1919, baseball's watershed year. The shock of that scandal, the declining moments of glory of true heroes like Mathewson and Wagner, the war, the baseball fiscal disasters made pregnant by the Federal League War, uncertain boundaries extolled by **Einstein** and **Freud**, and the advent of **Babe Ruth**'s celebrated entrance to immortality in Yankee pinstripes cause these baseball worlds to collide with each other. Like the scales of measurement in Lilliput or Brobdignang everything becomes helter-skelter. Before 1919 there was a technical need for fantasy, but now with gambling and the Babe, the verisimilitude itself has become freakish and distorted. And obstacles are now the given: the curse of a banal democracy is that split between the shared principles of a unified shared purpose versus the fragmented individual's search for identity. These novels depict America's frightening embrace with onrushing darkness. The world was once safe and flat, and **Cher** was once a virgin, but now Babe Ruth out homers entire rosters.

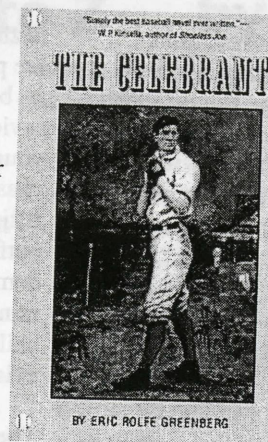


David Carkeet's *The Greatest Slump of All Time* is tender, mournful, and hilarious. The great painter **Max Beckman** promoted "a raw, average vulgar art which doesn't live between sleepy fairy-tale moods and poetry but rather concedes a direct entrance to the fearful, commonplace, splendid, and the average grotesque banality in life." This novel, about an entire starting roster on a National League team profoundly depressed, is as funny and as raw as any sporting book written. The ineffectual manager narrates a seemingly endless pornographic joke, constantly interrupted; the players devise or dream up improbable strategies that leave opponents open mouthed, bitter, and defeated. As the winning continues, the individuals fall apart, scared of success, resistant to the marital obligations, paranoid of teammates' hitting streaks. There are bitterness, superstition, and roving day-to-day theories of life rejected and accepted; sad about the game, but terrified of life, these somehow sympathetic players endure each other, like Sisyphus. They batter the media's clichés, fight for fathers' and fans' affections, and make it into the World Series. They, like Richard III, hate the idle pleasures of the day, and seek solace in guns, hotels, bars, and fantasies, all the while playing baseball expertly and gracefully. To one "the action on the field is like an orgasm taking twenty-three years to happen." The skipper seeks patterns. Routine plays become baroque, confusing all except the individual engineer. Mothers sit silent. Many players "withdraw into silent, ardent resentment." The novel, as with its depicted final game, never reaches satisfactory resolution. The players stalk off, and allow the reserves the glory, or the bitterness. One suicide and a mini rebellion and the players are soon prepping not for batting practice but post-career sadness, lives of

deprivation, serious pain, and persistent disappointment. As with the running joke, and the fireballer pitcher's virginity, and the season itself, there are no endings here, no voluntary mirth: just racism, grey depression, solitude, and no patterns; except the Yankees are in the World Series so the players go on a fishin' trip, a few days earlier than they should have. Let their child conspire, and let the fans be ignorant of the players' constant on-field panic. Fish neither talk back, nor carry weapons. There are no scores kept.

As rich as Carkeet's book is about the fear of playing, similarly textured is the gambling fabric of Brendan Boyd's *Blue Ruin: A Novel of The 1919 World Series*. As good as **Eliot Asinof's** *Eight Men Out* is, Boyd's fictionalization of the same topic rings truer: the conflation of post-War euphoria, the greed of gamblers and players, the profane slang, the depiction in to the minutiae of sadness of lost men, all sing here, through the eyes and voice of **Joseph "Sport" Sullivan**. Sullivan, a real actor in the drama of the Chicago team throwing, engineers a big payoff for himself, and once accomplished, the novel traces his fall; once Hamlet-like, contemplative, rueful, restrained, he was a pretty big fish in a dirty pond who owned a gambler's code; after the jets were paid off, everything changed. Girlfriends were actually hookers; Hollywood was more real than the East Coast; money slipped through hands like water through a hot-up corpse. Ironically, the purposeful direction, conventions, and quotidian honor of Sullivan's life were most in evidence in the planning and execution of the crime. Once it was discovered that a few people could manufacture such a catastrophic illusion-busting of this magnitude, the mosaic of life changed. There was no longer a bottom. Society failed in that it felt, as in slavery, mere codification, as in baseball player's contracts, was mutual, or produced serenity. Just because a system works does not make it fair, moral, or desirable. The rebellious players and their sad lives; the gamblers who add, but don't subtract; the owners and their pontifical avarice: none at the advent of the Roaring Twenties was a winner. Deep was forgotten. Money had no value. And every athletic competition could be fixed. In Mexico at the end, jailed, but safe from prosecution, Sport Sullivan is no longer a person: cut off from his language, his family, his way of life, he is rewarded with nothingness, no action, no lingering. All bets are off. He can dream of his foreign America, but that too is gone.

Another lost world, more tender, more simple, more



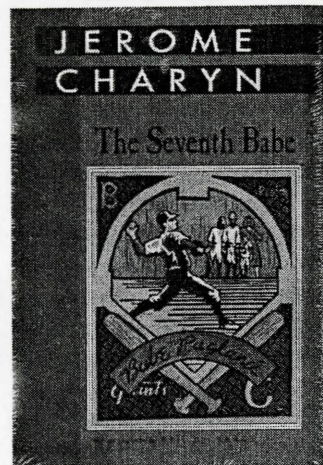
moving, is conjured in Eric Rolfe Greenberg's beautiful *The Celebrant*, a story about baseball at the turn of the century, the assimilation of Jews into society, and hero worship, here the larger than life pitcher for the New York Giants, **Christy Mathewson**, an immense figure, physically, athletically, and morally. *Blue Ruin* was slang for bad liquor, or disgraceful ruin, but here the sadness comes from within.

Jackie, a pitcher of promise, a conflicted son of immigrants, and a master jeweler, traces Mathewson's rise, and the Giants', through a series of games realistically and accurately rendered: Mathewson's perfect game; New York's World Series win in 1905; **Merkle's** boner; **Snodgrass's** muff. Jackie's brother, an inveterate gambler—friend to **Hal Chase** and **John McGraw**—provides the parallelism; at a time when the game itself provided the spectacle (as an execution) the viewer could only watch: the activity itself had a timetable, a rigid set of established rhythms and regulated repetitions. Fans were fans, that's all. The physical elaboration of the event was all. But with the intercession of gambling, hero worshiping, stakes were raised, breaking the spirit of the contests and Jackie's confidence in the American system, things as the dawn of the century had just promised. The game, and life, became reductionist parodies, thwarted by merely conventional ball playing or logical methods. There was too much pressure to bear; as the stakes rose, the play became a play. The naïve narrator maintained a nostalgic view of the game and as the ballplayers and owners exposed themselves as the brutal barbarians that they were, perception clouded. In the search for values, Jackie couldn't maintain the balanced tension between vicarious fervor and the inherent naturalism of an action that ended either winning or losing. As a religious Jew, as an idealist, as a fan, he demanded transmogrification, not betting slips, mockery, or failed intentions. He lost his faith.

These immigrants' sons—on and off the field—were drunken and disaffection scions of a hopeless heritage. The dialogue in all of these books resembles not so much a synthesis, or compromise, or communication, but jagged peaks of illogic. The characters can't write about themselves because when they look into the mirrors they



say “who the hell’s that?” Each of the novels loses momentum, writes about women badly, zigzags their tonal keys, and struggles for authenticity. But no sports book I know—not even **Exley’s** *The Fan’s Notes*—is as abrupt, vile, comic, horrific, or degenerative, with inane small talk, failed sexuality, questionable honor, as **Jerome Charyn’s** *The Seventh Babe*, a great American novel by a



great American writer. Charyn practically re-invented, not merely re-invigorated, the American detective novel in his series about Marilyn and Isaac Sidel, and Blue Eyes and the Guzmanns, and here his aim is equally rambunctious and high. The character, the seventh Babe in Baseball in the year 1923, Babe Raglan has a name that simultaneously echoes the motif of a Bildungsroman (a babe, around adult men

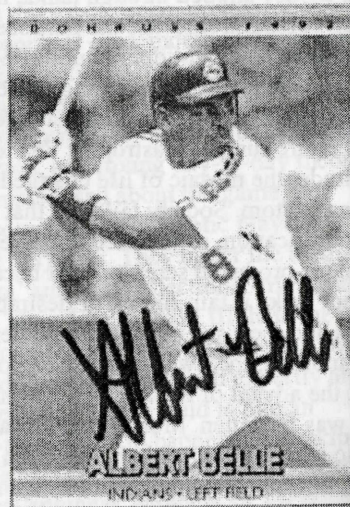
for the first time), and **Lord Ragland**, creator of a literary chart of mythological patterns. Here, Charyn debunks these myths and re-applies them, for these baseball players, either in the big leagues or the outlaw Negro Leagues where Babe spends playing and managing the majority of his career, or for the hangers-on: truth and redemption come to the faux-foundling as he asserts his rugged individualism, frontier democracy, communion with and conquest of the natural world, and America’s sense of exceptionalism.

This books hums with life: it is wicked, scared and profane—almost a raw expose of the failure of sports, society, race, and the market during the 20’s and 30’s. Wounds, gaping physical ones and inner, figure preeminently, harkening to **Sophocles’** last tragedy, *Philoctetes*, which is referred to several times near the end. As with all these books the past of baseball serves as a grand design that somehow becomes pale, and each of our heroes needs to grip with absent or unloving fathers, often hilariously symbolized by the wayward managers and their obtuse coaching staffs. No one knows the score at these contests. And if the story here is Adamic, searching for a prior Eden, the story is Oedipal as well, a tragedy that fathers get slain, before their time. Babe Raglan’s need for clarity is simply a need for the box scores of his daily life to measure concretely against the

haziness of the dark hotel rooms. All five of these novels are picaresque and ribald, if also hollow inside: there are no benchmarks of greatness: Babe is no Babe Ruth no savior; Mathewson was gassed in France and died too young; Shoeless Joe, an illiterate hick with a magic bat, chased flies in South Carolina’s sandlots during his early fifties, fat, sweaty, and guilty; gamblers are exiled, outfielders commit suicide. The pockets of affirmation come from the relentless authorial zeal to depict the minor, but daily, struggle for domination in a game for children. Charyn does not curse democracy. He eviscerates it.

These fictions keep us warm during the long dark nights of our wintry discontent. They connect us to the past, create heroes from static box scores, and posit conflated vernacular, profane slang, and sporting lexicon to foment our limited vocabularies and imaginations. **Virginia Woolf**, noted switch hitter, said novelists were to “record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected.... Any method is right, every method is right...no perception comes amiss.” These methods found in these five books are fundamentally the psychic disturbances of ambivalences. We love and hate. We pass, fail. Win. Lose. We yearn—or we should—for the underdogs, but loathe the congress of failures, the confederation of misery. And these fictions here are agent provocateurs stressing the potential sorry state of hero worship: we would probably be better off collectively mowing our lawns, painting our falling-apart porches, holding our children tighter, longer. Me? I have no porch. But I do have Albert Belle’s rookie card in my wallet, firm against my backside.

*Michael Baker teaches composition at New Jersey colleges, where his students write about their fierce hatred of the New York Yankees.*



## The Real Red Sox A to Z by Frank D'Urso

While driving home the other day I heard the most bristlingly annoying ad I’ve heard in a long ass time.

The Red Sox wives, *your* Boston Red Sox wives, do a great deal of charity work. They do a semi-regular cook book in the summer. This winter for a change they’ve put together a book called *Boston Red Sox A to Z*. Proceeds go to charity so by all means go out and buy it. But dear *Zisk* readers, forgive me this thought and crux of this article—*these women are all multi-millionaires*. They could give these charities more money than they need without batting an eyelash let alone even asking their husbands for spare cash.

I guess I’m mad that they take their free time, do this good work, and expect us sports minded slobs in greater New Bling Bling to shell out money to make *them* feel like they are helping a cause? Gah!!!! And egad!!!!

So while listening to these kids recite the first few letters of the Red Sox Alphabet (“B” is for “Ball”) I decided to create my own version of this A to Z list and encourage y’all to drop a few extra coins towards your local charities next time you run across one.

“A” is for “Aarrrrrrgh” I screamed in Game 6 (*the* game six). It’s also for **Harry Agganis** who died before his time.

“B” is for the brick that I “borrowed” from reconstruction of the area behind Fenway’s homeplate.

“C” is for **Tony C**, gawd bless his soul, another Red Sox who died young.

“D” is for dummy. Grady Little should have taken Pedro out.

“E” is for **Eckersley**. That guy had cool hair.

“F” is for **Frazer**, who screwed us over and how.

“G” is for the Green Monster, and all those who’ve secretly had their ashes mixed into the playing field.

“H” is for **Hawk Harrelson**. The dude could play and was cool.

“I” is for the Impossible Dream year of 1967, which formed the foundation of my preteen summers.

“J” is for **Jim Rice**, #14, my own personal hero. He deserves to be in the Hall of Fame.

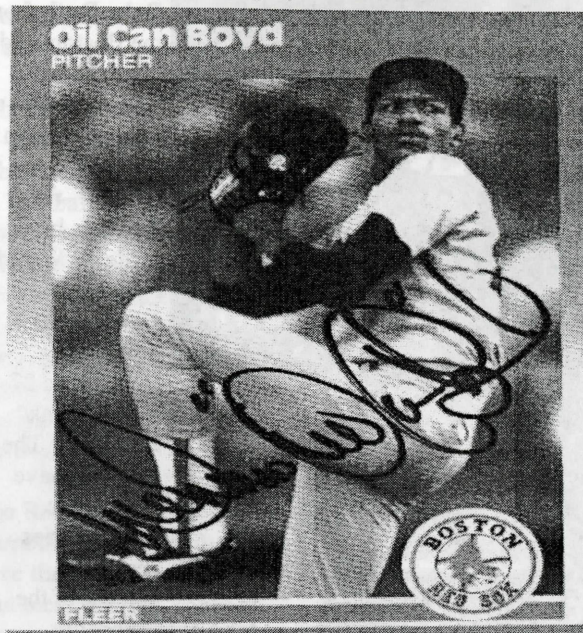
“K” is for **Ken Coleman**, a voice I grew up listening to.

“L” is for losing because of that stupid damn curse.

“M” is for money, which drives the game today, and also **Margo Adams**, who was chicken man’s lay.

“N” is for Negroes, because the organization was shortsighted enough to turn away **Jackie Robinson**, **Willie Mays** and **Hank Aaron**...

“O” is for **Orlando Cepeda** who played for them briefly, and **Oil Can Boyd** who played for them for awhile.



“P” is for **Pedro**, who *will* drill you in the ass.

“Q” is for **Dan Quisenberry** who pitched against us so queerly.

“R” is for RED

“S” is for SOX, RED-SOX, RED-SOX, RED-SOX!

“T” is for Ye Olde Town Team, the best nickname, and El Tiante, a giant of this game!

“U” is for **Ugueth Urbina** who we let go to use “Closer By Committee,” which failed.

“V” is for victory, the all-elusive World Series victory to add to the FIVE they earned.

“W” is for wins. This team can pile them on when they “Cowboy Up.”

“X” is for X-Red Sox **Roger Clemens**, and all the rest. They all come home eventually.

“Y” is for **Yaz**, the potato-farming, hard-working, hard-playing, long-careered sunnovagun.

“Z” is for **Zisk**. **Richie Zisk** would’ve been great if he wore the carmine hose.

*Frank D’Urso is a member of SABR and travels to Cooperstown every summer.*



# The Curse of Donnie Baseball by Len Vlahos

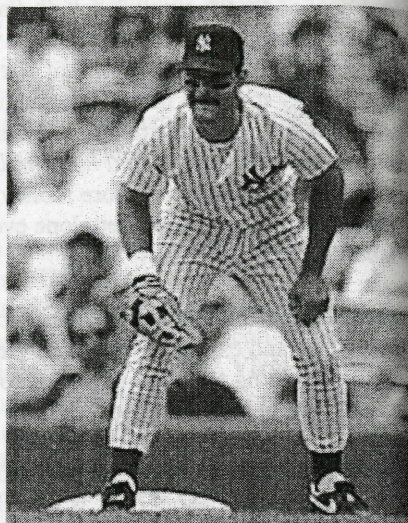
The New York Yankees. The Neeeeeeew Yoooooooork Yankees! The most vaunted, storied franchise in the history of sport.



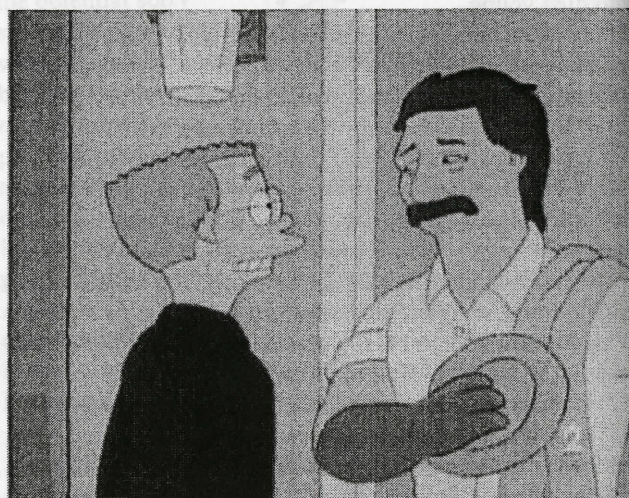
Since acquiring **Babe Ruth** from the Boston Red Sox after the 1919 season—a key moment in baseball history—the Yankees have made 40 World Series appearances, winning a remarkable 27 times. Think about that. The Yankees have been in the World Series nearly 50 percent of the

time. On average, they're vying for a championship almost every other year.

So what happened to those magical Yankees? How could this unstoppable juggernaut be so easily stopped, especially when they had an owner who wasn't afraid to spend money? What one common factor did each of those 14 seasons share? What was it the baseball gods saw and just didn't like? The answer to all of these questions is summed up in two words: **Don Mattingly**.



Donnie Baseball, one of the all-time great Yankees, made his debut with the club on September 8, 1982, and played all the way through the 1995 season. He put up phenomenal numbers until chronic back problems slowed him down in the early '90s. He was a great player, and a great Yankee, but for reasons only the baseball gods understand, Mattingly never made it to the World Series.

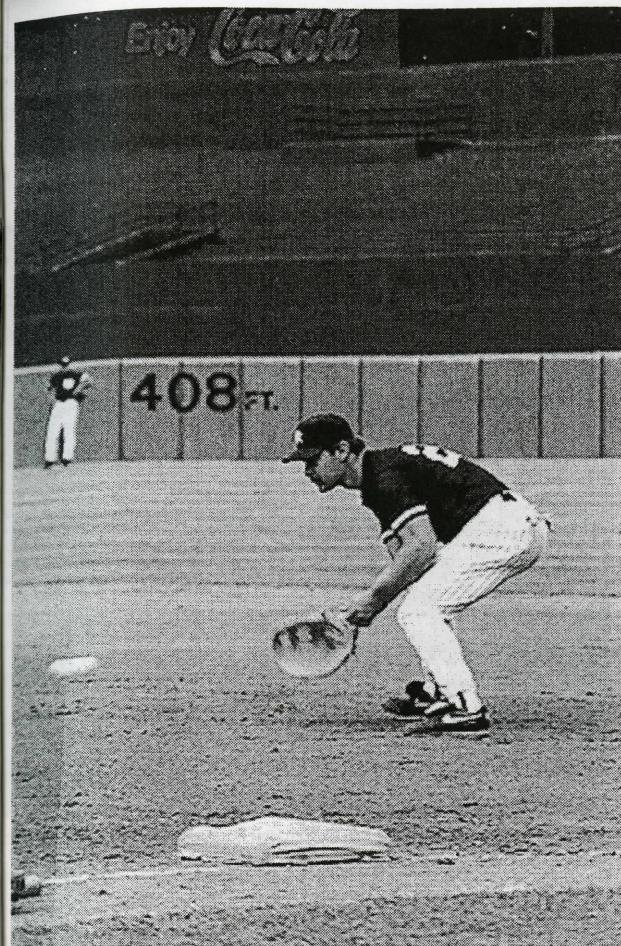


I hate the Yankees.

Watching **Tug McGraw** lead the "You Gotta Believe" Mets into the playoffs, and watching skinny little **Bud Harrelson** duke it out with baseball's most talented thug (**Pete Rose**) in the National League Championship Series in 1973, was enough to indelibly imprint orange and blue on my eight-year-old brain. I've been a Mets fan for my whole life.

As you might expect, the Mets live in the perpetual shadow of their cross-town, pinstriped rivals. They've made only four World Series appearances in their 43 year history, and Yankee fans are only too happy to remind Mets fans of this fact at every opportunity. By and large, it's hell to be a Mets fan.

But there was one brief respite from that hell. The longest World Series drought for the Yankees was the 14-year stretch from 1982 to 1995. During that time the Yankees



The guy was a jinx. Deny it if you like, Yankee fans, but the numbers just don't lie.

Some die-hards will point out that the Yanks won their division in 1994 and made it to the playoffs in 1995. But notice their twitchy, nervous smile as they tell you this. They know that 1994 was cut short by the strike, and that the Yankees only made the playoffs in 1995 as a result of the new Wild Card rule.

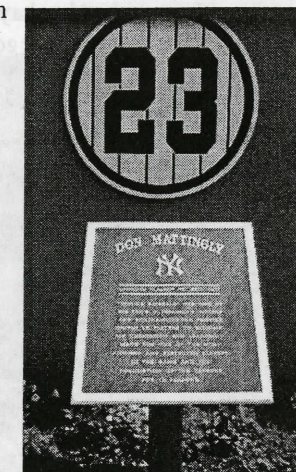
1995 in particular was bizarre. It was as if the baseball mortals found a loophole to sneak the legendary Yanks back into the post season, even allowing them to win the first two games of the division series. But when the baseball gods caught wind of this chicanery they propelled the Mariners through three straight wins in the most heart-breaking series loss in modern Yankee history. Don Mattingly shone those five games, but his jinx shone brighter.

Since Mattingly put down his bat, the Yankees have returned to the Yankee way: six World Series appearances and four World Series wins in eight years. They even beat my team for the championship in 2000. We Mets fans crawled back into the shadows.

But all that is about to change. Why? Because the Yankees will not be heading to the World Series this year.

Oh, I know what you're thinking. "The Yankees acquired **A-Rod**, **Sheffield** and **Vazquez** in the off-season, Len. They're the best freaking team in baseball." They might be if not for one other off-season move: the acquisition of their new batting coach, **Don Mattingly**. He's back in pinstripes, and so is his curse. (Hell, it already reached out and squeezed the life from **Bernie Williams'** appendix.)

The Red Sox may have their Bambino, and the Cubs may have their goat, but the Yankees, yes, the Yankees, have a curse of their own. The curse of Donnie Baseball.



Thank you, baseball gods, thank you.

- ◆ 13 years without a World Series appearance...longest in Yankee history since acquiring Babe Ruth. 1982 through 1995 (no World Series in 1994).
- ◆ Didn't win a division, other than strike shortened year, between 1982 and 1995.
- ◆ Six consecutive years finishing fourth or worse, 1987 through 1992.
- ◆ 40 World Series appearances since acquiring Ruth.
- ◆ 27 World Series victories since acquiring Ruth.

After touring with his rock band **Woofing Cookies**, **Len Vlahos** settled down to the world of books. He's currently the director the independent bookstore online portal, Booksenes.com (And he now pines for those subdued days of rock-and-roll!) Len also co-owns and writes for PublicHandicapper.com.



# What Shall I Do Now That My Cookie Has Crumbled?

## A Zisk Guide to Rooting for Some Other Team by Mark Hughson

The idea for this guide came to me at work the other day. Some guys were talking about baseball (always acceptable small talk in any work environment) during the 2003 LCS. A co-worker of mine was asked whom he was rooting for and the response was, "Eh, it doesn't really matter to me now, I'm an Oakland fan." At this point I was delighted that another A's fan was in my midst, but then something strange occurred. The asker of the question then said "Ah, okay so you must want the Yankees to win, I've got a good joke for you." (Note: I have not yet heard the joke as our supervisor came barreling in within seconds to remind us all about the work we should be doing instead of talking about

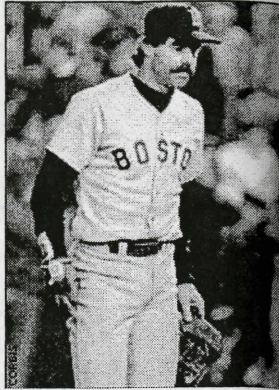


baseball—the nerve!). My brow furrowed. Oakland is my favorite team. The Red Sox beat them, so logically I want the Red Sox to lose...to the Yankees? Heck no! Actually, until that exact moment, I hadn't thought about whom to root for next. Come to think about it, I never thought about any of those fans of the Twins or Giants or Braves. What are they doing right now? And finally, one has to wonder what a Padres fan is thinking right now.\*

So without further ado, I now humbly present *Zisk's* guide to the roller coaster world of playoffs rooting. (Note: Detroit fans can pretty much skip to # 2.)

1) Root for your favorite team. Always. Even if you are the only one among dozens of opponents. Root for YOUR team. When I was 10, my whole 5th grade class

was rooting for the Mets, while **Sam Levy**, a courageous Jewish kid from around the block, was gunning for Boston. He took the heat during the series and took it even more after **Bill Buckner** made the Error Heard Round The World. Through it all Sam still wore that Sox hat. I think he's making a fortune now selling satellite dishes but the point is that Sam was a man. Disappointed, yes, but still, he was a lonely, embarrassed man.



1b) (That's "One Bee" by the way, not "first base.") If your team has won the round or pennant, and you want to bother rooting for teams in the other league (one of which will be your opponent soon) you should root for the underdog. Every single solitary person who cheers on an AL team was rooting for the Cubs over Atlanta on the NL side. The polls are probably still out but that's pretty much a fact. It's good to root for the underdog, because when it comes time to face your powerhouse team, you can crush them like a steam roller would a puppy.

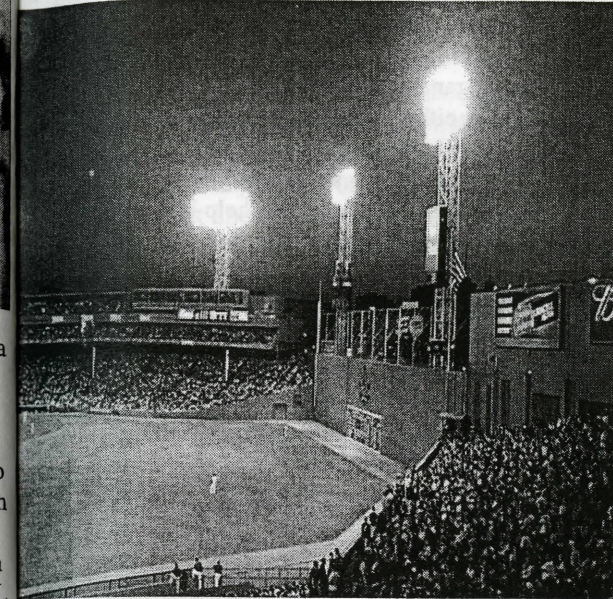
2) Now comes the tricky part. If your team is out of the picture, this is what you should do:

- ♦ Root for the team that's geographically closest to you. However, if you happen to live in a city that has two teams (NYC, Chicago, et al) don't vote for the cross-town rivals! That would be too weird. If two teams are equidistant from you, root for the team that has cooler uniforms (e.g. not the Marlins).
- ♦ If geography isn't your bag, root for the team that has a player you like. Especially if that player has never been to a World Series before (hello, **Sammy Sosa**). Or along similar lines, root against the team that has a player you hate on it, *especially* if that player has been to a World Series before (hello, **Derek Jeter**).

\* I was pondering this in rhetorical fashion, but the funniest answer to the question wins a prize.

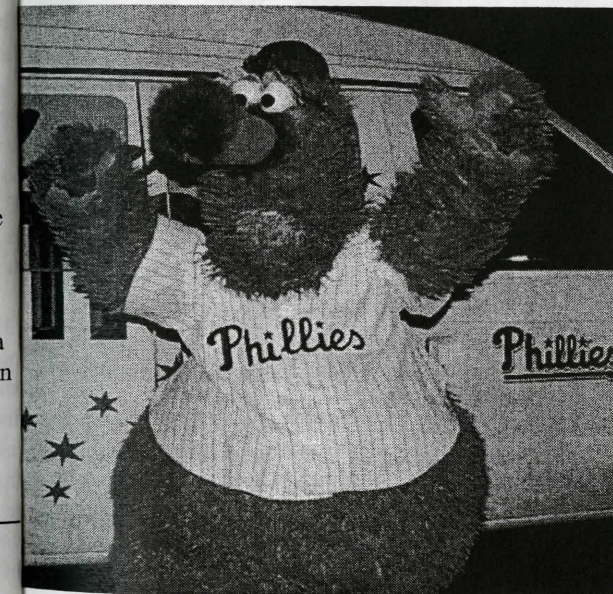
Okay, so maybe you're not into the love/hate thing, that's k. There are plenty of other strategies to choose from, including but not limited to:

- ♦ If you want a specific team to get the last pick in next year's draft, root for them.

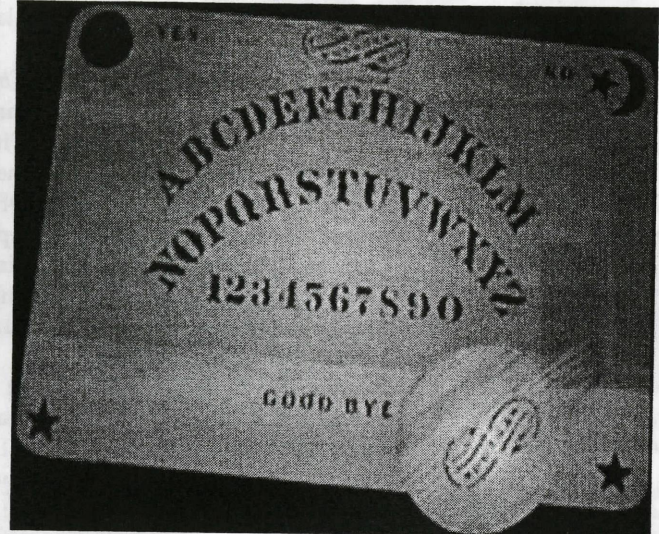


Root for the team with the best-looking ballpark, it will at least be an aesthetically pleasing series.

Root for the team with the zaniest mascot.



- ♦ Root for teams in alphabetical order (a clever way of saying "Don't root for the Yankees" without actually saying it).
- ♦ Put the team names on slips of paper in a fish bowl. Root for the team whose name is eaten last.
- ♦ If you've bet money on the game, root for the team that will win you the pot. I suppose this should go without saying, but an extra line or two in this piece makes it look more authoritative.
- ♦ Use a Ouija board.

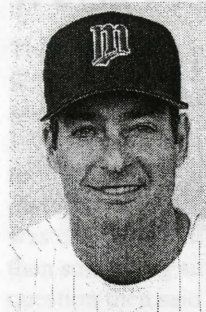


- ♦ If there's a girl you want to hook up with, find out what team she likes, and then root for them together. Think of the celebratory sex! If she doesn't like baseball, you'll just have to settle for regular sex (ho hum).
- ♦ If the Series has gone to seven games and you still haven't decided who to root for yet, you've got to bear down and flip a coin. AL is heads, NL is tails. Best of seven flips. You can use a Designated Flipper, but only in three or four flips, depending on whether or not you have a home field advantage (if your home is near a field, then you can have a DF for four flips).

*Mark Hughson lives in Syracuse with his wife and cat. His collection of 1980s baseball cards is only slightly outnumbered but his collection of 1990s indie rock albums.*



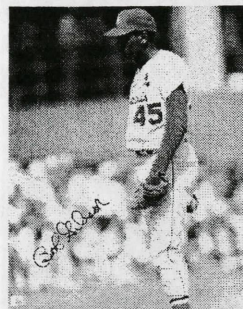
# Time to Eliminate the DH by Jeff Herz



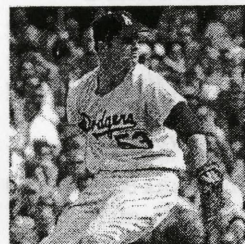
In honor of **Paul Molitor's** election to the Baseball Hall of Fame, I would like to begin a grassroots movement to eliminate the designated hitter (DH) from organized baseball. I believe there are three compelling reasons to remove this blight on the game. The DH rule was implemented in order to increase offense, which is no longer necessary. The game is more strategic and fun to watch without the DH. The sport has evolved into one organization instead of two independent leagues.

## *The DH rule was implemented in order to increase offense*

The 1960's were known as the decade of the pitchers. **Gibson, Koufax, Drysdale, Ford, Bunning and**



**Marichal** all defined that decade. In 1969, MLB uniformly changed the rules, lowering the height of pitchers' mounds in order to decrease the advantage of the pitcher and give batters a better opportunity to hit the ball. After a decade of station-to-station baseball, the American League was still looking for a way to bring more hitting to the game. So in 1973 they implemented the DH, allowing a designated hitter to hit for the pitcher, in an effort to increase offense. Evidence supports that this change both helped the hitter and hurt the pitcher, which is the intent of the rule. This effectively increased the run production in the AL compared to the NL, which is still the case today; however it had a negative effect in that it took a certain level of strategy away from AL managers.



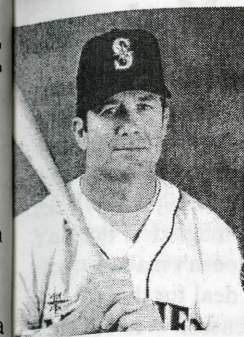
For the past 25 years or so, the DH has effectively served its purpose bringing more offense to the game. Today, I don't think anyone would

argue that we need more offense. In fact, the way the game is played now is radically different than it was played even in the early '90s. Offensive numbers are skyrocketing, pitchers are being shellacked left and right, and where there are multiple reasons for this phenomenon (expansion, shrinking strike zones, etc.), one glaring fact is that in half the games played pitchers don't hit for themselves. They either have an over-the-hill slugger or a slow-footed youngster hitting the ball a mile rather than producing outs or sacrificing a runner to the next base. Eliminating the DH could once again help level the playing field between the pitcher and the batter.

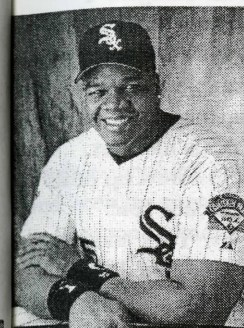
## *The game is more strategic without the DH*

Since 1973 it does not take a brain surgeon (in spite of **Tim McCarver's** book of the same name) to manage in the AL once the game starts. Once a lineup is set with a DH, all the manager needs to worry about is when to pull a pitcher and when there is a need for a pinch hitter or pinch runner. In the NL, these decisions are integrally linked together, and that component adds a significant strategic piece to the game that is lacking in the AL.

In spite of the fact that I root for an AL team, I honestly think the NL is a more interesting league to watch for the simple reason that there are more strategies involved. Having to decide when to pull a pitcher because he is coming up to bat, when to do a double switch, when to sit tight adds many more facets to the game. Watching the AL is entertaining if you like **Earl Weaver's** strategy to sit back and wait for a three-run home run. Once the lineup is set at the beginning of an AL game, very rarely is there a change to the lineup made unless there is an injury, a defensive replacement late in the game or a situational hitter/pitcher match up.

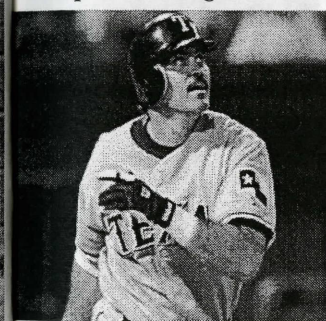


Having a pitcher in the lineup alters how you plan your pitches up and down the lineup. Knowing that the pitcher is coming in the 9th spot, allows you to vary how you attack the 7th and 8th hitters in the lineup depending upon the situation and time of the game. I remember going to a Yankee game in the mid 1990's when they were



playing the Cleveland Indians and noting that the visitor had nine players batting over .300. There is no such thing as a sure out in that lineup; any single person can kill you. How boring.

## *The sport has evolved into one organization instead of two independent leagues*



The AL has also forgotten about the sacrifice and the stolen base. I am not going to attempt to pull a **Bill James** here and justify the value of either of these statistics, but the fact that they are underutilized and add a surprise element makes the game more enjoyable to watch from this fans' perspective. Eliminating the DH will force managers to think more and make the game more interesting to the fans.

For almost a hundred years the two leagues acted as separately as they possibly could. There were interleague trades, there were interleague games in spring training, but once the season began, the leagues only met in the All-Star Game and the World Series. That all changed with the advent of interleague play a few years ago. It is time that they bring the rules into uniformity as well. In the past few years, league presidents have been eliminated, umpires are now employed by MLB not by the leagues, and the All-Star game is now just a glorified superstar show case and no run hitting contest, which the current commissioner

has made compelling by awarding the winner home field advantage in the World Series. MLB is attempting to regulate the game time, the strike zone, and overall conformity. AL vs. NL has essentially lost

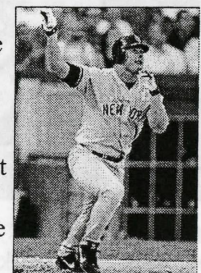
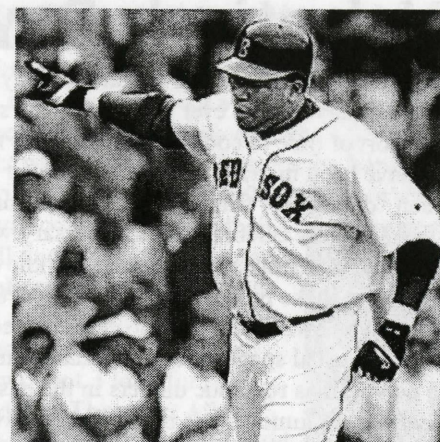
all its meaning in the past few years. So the last standing bastion between the leagues should also be eliminated immediately which translates to KO'ing the DH.

## *Argument against eliminating the DH*

Some will argue that the players union will never allow some of their own to go unemployed. There is a simple way around this argument; increase the roster size from 25 to 26 or 27. This allows a team to keep a player who would have been the designated hitter on its roster. They can then be used as a pinch hitter or in the field if they are still capable. The union cannot complain about its highest paid players being forced to the unemployment lines since the teams are making provisions to keep them employed.

I know the economics of the game will never allow this change to happen, but I thought it would be fun to dream about baseball the way it is supposed to be played, with nine players on the lineup card.

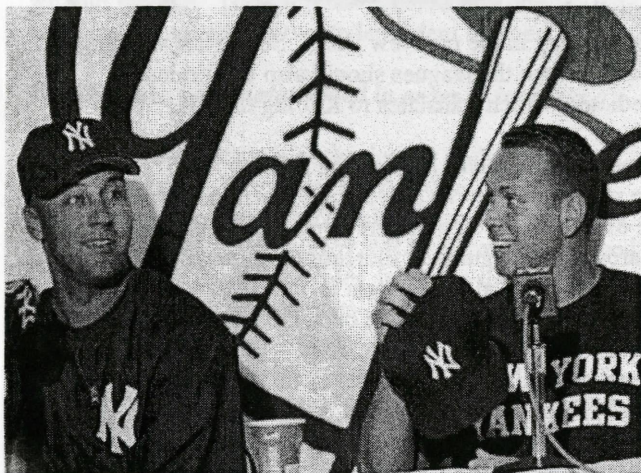
**Jeff Herz** is a rabid baseball fan—and yes, Virginia, an unbridled Yankee fan to boot. He begrudgingly works in the interactive marketing advertising field in order to support his wife **Nancy**, his 2 1/2 year old son **Jacob** and his yet to be known unborn child due in August 2004. He has been writing for **Zisk** since its infancy though has not had the distinction of being published in every issue to date. He has recently brought his baseball card collection down from the attic and has become addicted to this hobby, so if you have any cards for trade or sale, feel free to contact him at [herzy69@yahoo.com](mailto:herzy69@yahoo.com).





# A Valentine's Day Massacre by Kip Yates

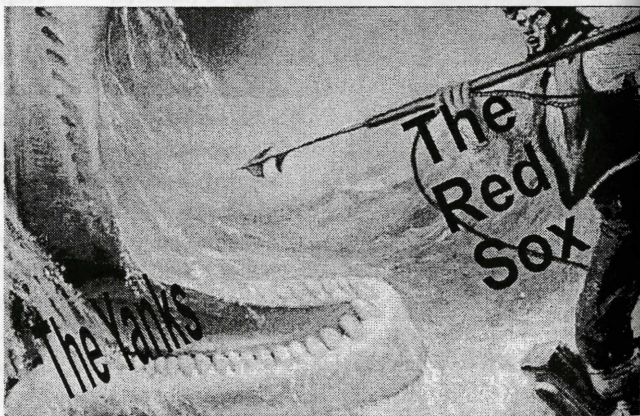
The clock was ticking away on Valentines Day, a Hallmark holiday if there ever was one. I was slowly running short of time to cook a romantic meal for **Jamie** whom I have been married to for almost seven years and have been "dating" for fifteen years. This is our day. Jamie and I usually celebrate our anniversary with a wink and a smile to Valentines Day because we know better. I had planned to make prosciutto chicken, something that said "I love you" without being too complicated and was more than the usual spaghetti and marinara sauce I have tried to pawn off as romantic dinners in the past. The cheesecake from Junior's was in the fridge. **River**, our



son, was napping. I just had to cook the meal before Jamie arrived home from work. Yet I found myself staring blankly into my computer screen. I could not quite believe what I was reading. It was like getting punched in the breadbasket. It was a 2 x 4 upside the head. The headline taunted me.

Was I waking from a lucid dream to a bona fide nightmare? There it was in black and white: **Alex Rodriguez** going to the Yanks. I had just completed writing what I would share with *Zisk* readers as my theory that the birth of my son signaled the end of the Yankees dynasty and now, not only was the dynasty alive and well; it had baseball's greatest shortstop, if not greatest player, on their payroll. Seconds ticked by and I asked myself several questions. Do I need to rewrite my article on the premature demise of the Yankees? Does this deal make sense? Can it be believed? Should I get out of town before the parade? Should I serve spinach as a side dish? I sat there for several minutes and then I did something that

absolutely surprised me. I went on with my life. Alex Rodriguez is now a Yankee and I could not care less. I am surprised at my sudden shift in attitude but not that surprised. I guess my priorities have changed or I have just thrown in the towel when it comes to hating the Yankees. Maybe I am just in denial. The mega deal the Yankees made with the Texas Rangers doesn't make a difference to me whatsoever. It's a good deal for the Yankees and a bad one for baseball in general. What else is new? I was one of the many fans hoping the Red Sox would make the trade for Pay Rod. I prematurely celebrated with my brothers-in-arms and fellow Yankees haters. When that deal fell through, I truly believed Pay Rod would at least open the season with the Rangers. I never thought in a million years that he would be traded to the Yankees. Then third baseman **Aaron Boone** blew his knee playing basketball and everything changed. Like they always have been able to do, the Yankees got their man and then some. They always close deals like this. Boston, on the other hand, always seems to screw up deals like this and when they do, the whining reaches epic decibels. Boston is always trumped by New York and has been since 1918. The falling apart of the Pay Rod deal to Boston is, in a nutshell, why the Red Sox cannot win anything. It's tough to win it all when you are only trying to beat the Yankees. The "Curse" is in the heads of the entire entity. The front office, team, fans and city all have been driven crazy over the years like Captain Ahab and the Yankees are their Moby Dick. They could have had Pay Rod, but they were not offering enough. They could



have kept Ruth! They could have been the first to sign a Negro Leaguer instead of the last. They could have had **Mays**. They could have won in '78 but they choked and

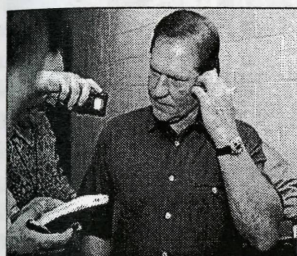


not just in the **Bucky Dent** game. They should have won it all in '86, but didn't. They could have won the AL last year but were again beaten by the better run team. If this winter has taught me anything, it's that when it comes to wheelin' and dealin' in the off-season, Boston can blow their trumpet pretty loud but they always get blown out by the Yankees brass and it carries over into the season. The Yankees get it done. That's the bottom line. They are closers and the Red Sox are posers.

Boston: handled trade negotiations for Pay Rod through the media because they could not wait to announce that they had outdone and outspent the Yankees. They alienated two of their superstars in the process and did not close the deal.

New York: handled the affair with an air of secrecy and did not announce anything until the deal was done. They added a seventh All Star and closed the deal to much fanfare.

I hate everything Pay Rod stands for. He gets to win now and keep his money and to hell with the other 24 guys that he was contractually obligated to stick by in Texas. Pay Rod gets his cake and gets to eat it too. I don't buy his

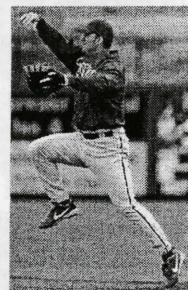


"team first... I just want to win" shtick for a moment. He is the most selfish player playing on the most selfish team in the most selfish league in all of sports. Just as selfish is his agent, **Scott Boras**, who engineered everything from the record

breaking blockbuster contract to the potential trade to Boston and eventual trade to New York. New York *Daily News* columnist **Mike Lupica** said of Boras: "...the de facto Yankee general manager, was down the row, beaming at A-Rod when he wasn't checking the floor in front of him in case somebody had dropped a 20-dollar bill."

I read the other day that Boston's payroll is about 20% higher than the nearest competitor. New York's payroll is about 50% percent higher than Boston's. In the NFL, at the beginning of the season, even the Lions have a shot at the Super Bowl. The same cannot be said for the Tigers. The collective bargaining agreement has been a disaster. One owner continues to thumb his nose at the luxury tax that other owners put into their pockets and not their

teams. I hope that the current labor agreement expires without another agreement in place and baseball players go on strike for about seven years. Sure, I will miss the game but not *this* game. Without a team salary cap, you can rest assured that anytime a player signs a \$100 million dollar contract with another team besides the Yankees, the celebration will be short-lived. Why? Because owners like **Tom Hicks** will continue to strap their team's payroll to only a few players and **George Steinbrenner** will continue to bail them out and take on their all stars because he can and does afford it and they can and will not. I look for **Mike Hampton** and **Jim Thome** or **Albert Pujols** to be New York before all is said and done.



With that said, don't start planning the parade route in New York just yet. Boston still has all-star caliber pitching and the Yankees have all righties. Boston has team chemistry, give or take **Nomar** and **Manny**, and New York has a clubhouse of ultra egos that could implode at any moment. Don't forget: no team has ever won the World Series with a \$100 million dollar guy on their payroll. And the Yankees have four of them! Also remember: what looks good on paper does not always look good on the field. See the 2001 Mets! I am stepping off my soapbox now. There will not be any more rants about the Yankees from me. I am done. I am exhausted. I don't care anymore. Besides, I have a spaghetti dinner I need to make.

*Kip Yates, a mild mannered supervisor by day at a posh New York publishing office, likes to don his cape and pretend to be Subway Man by night. When an elderly woman is shoved into the doorway of a train car, Kip will be there. When a pregnant mother is not offered a seat on the train, Kip will be there. When a man suffers from a mild case of elephantitis of the scrotum and takes up more seat than is his fair share, Kip will be there. When Kip cannot be there, he is usually home with his wife and their love child. Much has changed for Kip in recent months. For instance, he stopped leaving the toilet seat up, uses eating utensils, wears shirts at the dinner table and started closing soda bottle caps tighter. The fizz escapes that way, ya know. Kip, an avowed Yankee hater, is tired of hating the Yankees and wishes they would just go away. He has promised his wife no more anti-Yankees rants. Though she gave him three "in case of emergency, break glass" scenarios.*



# Dad and Baseball by Sara Dierck

My dad, **John Dierck**, loves baseball more than about anyone I know. He spent countless hours when I was growing up playing catch, going to pitching and hitting clinics with me and attending my games. I think I broke his heart when I quit playing fastpitch softball when I was 16. He even left the pitching rubber out in the field near my house where I used to practice. He's also been a Mariners fan longer than I've been alive. He was very disappointed that while living in the Bay Area I switched allegiances and became an Oakland Athletics fan. He even joked that I would become a Yankees fan now that I live in New York, but that's not the way my dad raised me. He wanted me to write that he's such a big fan, he bought my mom *The Sporting News* for Valentine's Day instead of flowers. But she loves baseball too, and as long as there are fans like my dad, baseball will never die. I can always call my dad and talk baseball. I called him up one week in February, shortly before pitchers and catchers were to report to spring training. Here are some of his thoughts and feelings about the upcoming season and his beloved Seattle Mariners.

**Sara:** You've been checking the sports section everyday for Mariners news and you can't wait for spring training and the season to start. What is it about baseball season that separates it from the rest of the year?

**Dad:** Well, the rest of the year you just look forward to it starting, but during the season you can anticipate all the action that's happening at the time and the onfield happenings. It's like they have their own life.

**Sara:** It's pretty unpredictable, too.

**Dad:** Right. And every game means so much to how the outcome of the season is. It's not just "Oh well, that was a loss, tomorrow we can win." Every game counts so much.

**Sara:** It's crazy because there's so many, but even when your team will lose one you're so upset about it. Even though it's one out of 160 games.

**Dad:** Right. And you just try to analyze what could have happened to make it come out better or if it's a certain player that's causing this to happen repeatedly you start getting down on them (laughs) or hope that someone else will come and take over and make it better.

**Sara:** You're always the most optimistic sports fan I know, especially at the beginning.

**Dad:** (Laughs) I'm optimistic every game. I try to listen to every game.

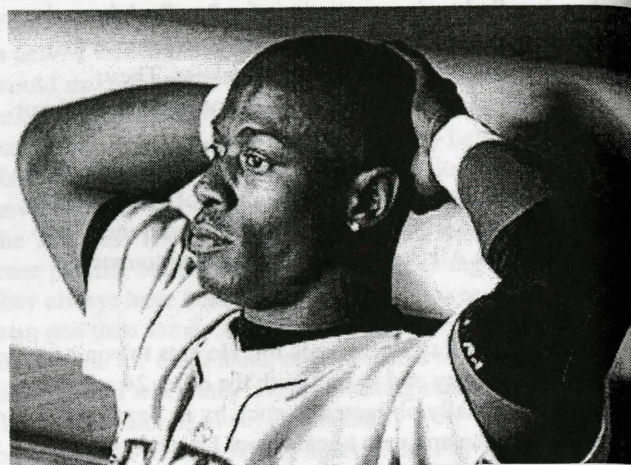
**Sara:** How do you think the Mariners are going to do this year? Do you think they'll be able to keep going strong?

**Dad:** I think that they're going to be a lot stronger this year because their everyday players have proven to be stable, you know, they're consistent.

**Sara:** It seems like they do a nosedive at the end of the season...

**Dad:** They got rid of a lot of those players that were causing that to happen.

**Sara:** Like [Mike] Cameron?



**Dad:** Yeah.

**Sara:** Who else do you think was causing it?

**Dad:** I really think that we put a lot of hope in players like **Arthur Rhodes**, and Cameron...I hated to see him go, but if he could have performed like his potential everyday it would have been different.

**Sara:** It's hard to see someone strike out a lot.

**Dad:** Especially when you're not swinging the bat. That's the hardest thing. I'd rather see him swinging and missing it than standing there and watching it go by thinking it should have been a ball, but there's other players that left too like [Jeff] Cirillo. I mean, I felt a heartbreak every time he struck out or didn't get a hit. You know, everyone was pulling for him the whole time. I don't think anyone was down on him because they didn't think he was good.

**Sara:** I was glad to see that guy go.

**Dad:** Well, yeah, and another one that was a heartbreak too was **Carlos Guillen** because the guy is a phenomenal defensive player and he has potential, but he also was injury-prone. They got rid of him and they now have the Giants shortstop...

**Sara:** **Rich Aurilia**.

**Dad:** I think he's a really solid everyday player.

**Sara:** Yeah, I like him a lot.

**Dad:** I think he's really going to stabilize that part of the field. And then [Scott] Spezio, too, and they've got some really good back-up with [Willie] Bloomquist and I don't know too much about this **Ramon Santiago** guy, they picked him up from Detroit.

**Sara:** Spezio's a first baseman, usually.

**Dad:** Well, he's played third too. I haven't read too much about **Quentin McCracken**, one of the new outfielders.

**Sara:** Was that guy on the Diamondbacks? Because that sounds like a Diamondback name. Those guys always have the worst names.

**Dad:** (Laughs) I can look him up. I have who's gone on all the teams, in today's paper. That's really fun. I was figurin' out where they came from. (Laughs) There's so much movement.

**Sara:** One bad thing about losing Cameron was that he was a really good outfielder.

**Dad:** He was a good mix between **Ichiro** and [Randy] Winn. That really helped, having his speed.

**Sara:** A lot of people said that was the best outfield.

**Dad:** That was a pretty good outfield. We'll see how this one goes. [Raul] Ibanez has a lot to prove. He wants to come back and be a hero.

**Sara:** So who's in center then?

**Dad:** They moved Winn to center. And Ichiro's in right. Ichiro needs to go after the ball more, too. Every single time he needs to go for it. I'll be happy with that effort.

**Sara:** Do you think he was starting to slack a little bit?

**Dad:** I thought maybe last year a little bit, yeah.

**Sara:** It doesn't seem fair that the Mariners could win 93 games and not go to the postseason. It seems like they should have gone in the Twins spot...

**Dad:** Well, that's not the way it's set up. You gotta do what it takes and there's some games they should have won. And most of them were the games that [Ryan] Franklin lost one or two to nothing. And he would have been a 20-game winner probably, with a little more offense.

**Sara:** I always root for **Edgar [Martinez]**. Are they going to let him run this year?

**Dad:** If he's healthy. He's anticipating being healthier, but he knows his legs are failing. All the speed he did have isn't there anymore. (Laughs)

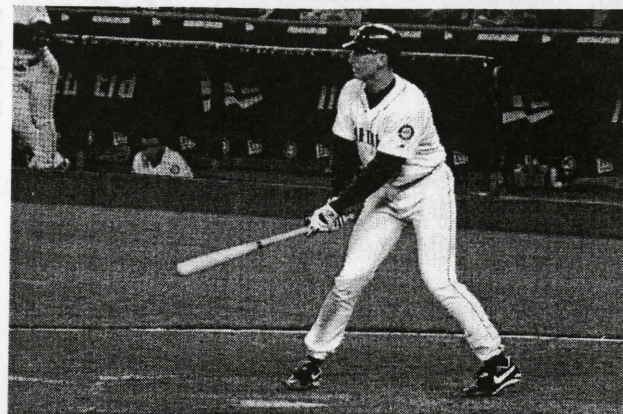
**Sara:** That's crazy that he's that powerful of a hitter that—

**Dad:** I know. His doubles are now singles. And that's the way they know it. They just hold him up. That's a telling factor right there. And he knows it. I think this is his last year. But he wants one more try at a World Series.

**Sara:** And that's why it would be a nice story. Mom was

telling me about the other players that it might be their last year. Who were the other players?

**Dad:** [John] Olerud. I guess Olerud's son is going to



start school this year. Before then he was traveling with them.

**Sara:** He's not that old, is he?

**Dad:** He's 35 or 36. But it's his final year in his contract so he's throwing out rumors that this might be it. Plus his offense wasn't as good last year. If he has a good offensive year that might make the difference.

**Sara:** And how about **Freddy [Garcia]**?

**Dad:** I think Freddy's going to rebound. I didn't know, and I don't think many people knew that he had such bad ear problems. He's had operations on his ears. He was off balance. It's hard not to throw a ball without having a balance problem. It looked like he was off balance, but they didn't put it out. Everyone thought he was wearing earplugs because he didn't want to hear the boos. (Laughs) But the earplugs were special plugs that helped him with his balance.

**Sara:** They have a couple of younger pitchers that did a pretty good job last year. Do you see them stepping up more this year and making a name for themselves?

**Dad:** You mean like Franklin?

**Sara:** Yeah. He did pretty well but hardly anyone knows that guy.

**Dad:** Well, they're going to. I listened to an interview on the Hot Stove last Thursday night and they interviewed Franklin and he was so excited because last year he was trying to get a spot on the roster, this year he's pretty much guaranteed it. And he has another pitch (laughs) that they haven't let him throw yet. And it's the knuckleball.

**Sara:** Wow.

**Dad:** (Laughs) And he can throw it well. But he was explaining it that if you throw knuckleballs a lot it does something to your wrist so that your other pitches aren't



as good so they don't want him to throw it.

**Sara:** That's going to freak people out.

**Dad:** No kidding. If they let him throw it. They're really strict with what they let those guys throw. They don't want him to mess up his other pitches. And he's so deceptive because he's small. But that's a pitch that we can look forward to seeing. And as he gets older he could be a knuckleballer. Anyway, yeah, him and there's another, [Rafael] Soriano, who's really good. He's got the high heat that'll blow you away.

**Sara:** And it's cool they have "Everyday" Eddie, Eddie Guardado.

**Dad:** I know. (Laughs) That's really good. I'm looking forward to seeing him pitch.

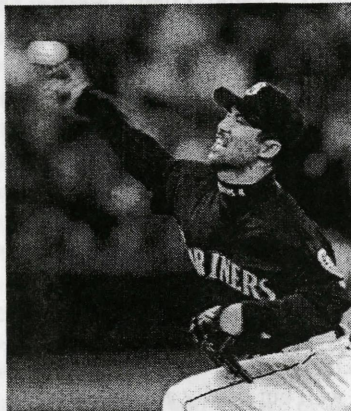
**Sara:** Are they going to have him as a closer, then?

**Dad:** Yeah.

**Sara:** Because [Kazuhiro] Sasaki didn't resign.

**Dad:** And that's understandable. His wife doesn't want to live here. And that was really upsetting to him because he's a real family man. He didn't want to be away from her and he'd give up all that money just stay with his wife and that's really cool. Everybody's happy that that was the reason. You could tell it in his whole demeanor. He wasn't there like he was the first couple seasons.

**Sara:** Do you think that [Shigetoshi] Hasegawa would be a better closer?



**Dad:** No, I think he's a better set-up guy. It's nice to have him, he can finish out games, and save the closer for the next game, but I think he's better in the 7th, 8th.

**Sara:** What about the possibility that Omar [Vizquel] was going to come back? Were you excited about that?

**Dad:** No, I didn't want Omar back. You know...it's nostalgic, but I don't think it would have worked.

**Sara:** Kind of like the rumor that Ken Griffey, Jr. wanted to come back?

**Dad:** Now that one I could handle better, because he hasn't done well since he's left and if he came back he'd have something to prove. And that's what everyone wants Ken Griffey to do, is prove it. You know? The heartbreak would go away if he could prove it. Because it was a heartbreak. Losing all those quality players, you know...I wouldn't take Alex [Rodriguez] back. But I would take

Ken Griffey back.

**Sara:** (Laughs) Yeah, I think I feel the same way.

**Dad:** I think that if Alex gets booed the rest of his career whenever he comes here, that's fine. Especially if he goes to New York, because he said he would never play for New York. I remember him saying it.

**Sara:** That's awful.

**Dad:** I know. And I know it's going to happen.

**Sara:** Matt [Sara's boyfriend] said there's no God when he heard that. (Laughs)

**Dad:** There is, but it's not George Steinbrenner. (Both laugh) And I just think that, you know, you can try to buy every player in the whole league and what good is it going to do you? You're still going to get beat, because they won't get along. (Laughs) And it'll just make us hate the Yankees even more.

**Sara:** Do you miss Lou [Piniella] at all?

**Dad:** I'm enjoying hearing Lou's exploits. I don't miss him.

**Sara:** It seems like when he left he took away a lot of the energy. Is there anyone that has as much energy as him?

**Dad:** No, I don't think he took the energy. I think he took a little enthusiasm, but not all the energy. They still won 93 games without him. They have the energy. But the enthusiasm, to win when you're an underdog, it's gone. But they're not underdogs. We don't need that. Tampa Bay needs it. But I enjoy hearing the tales of Lou. And he's got some players from the Mariners that he likes. He's trying to build the team up. He's got Tino back. He loved Tino. So that's kinda cool.

**Sara:** Does it seem like some kind of reward for being a loyal fan that the Mariners have become a consistent contender? Because you're been a fan from the beginning.

**Dad:** Well, I don't know...

**Sara:** Does it make it more enjoyable to watch?

**Dad:** It's always been enjoyable. But as far as a reward goes, I don't know if I need to be rewarded. I just like the chance of being able to win.

**Sara:** It's like the opposite of being a Yankees fan. They feel like they need to be rewarded.

**Dad:** Well, I don't boo my team. Never have. And I don't think I would. I would be sad for them if they didn't do well. And I don't think I need to be rewarded.

**Sara:** The '95 season, I still remember that. Have you started that book that mom got you? [Out of Left Field: How the Mariners Made Baseball Fly in Seattle by Art Thiel]

**Dad:** No. I haven't. I've looked at it. I don't want to get stuck in that. I have my own feelings about why they won and this is somebody else's idea. I'm not sure about it.

**Sara:** What are your feelings about how they started to win?

**Dad:** I think it was that they were playing with Lou's enthusiasm. He got them to play as hard as they could and probably they did better then they should have.

**Sara:** They did have some amazing players.

**Dad:** They did. And he used them wisely. He got to really manage that team. And that was the whole thing. He showed everybody what a good manager he was. And even though he had prior success, that was when it was really evident. I think it was mostly Lou that did it. But that book says stuff like they bought it.

**Sara:** Yeah, I didn't like hearing that.

**Dad:** No, I don't think they bought it. They did it with the talent. And they were all in the right frame of mind, they were all in sync at the right time and that's why they did it.

**Sara:** You don't really like crowds, but Safeco Field is a really amazing place to see a game, especially compared with the Kingdome. How many games do you think you'll try to get to this year? Do you think you'll go to more than one?

**Dad:** I don't know. I enjoy seeing it in my mind, listening to the radio.

**Sara:** Do you listen to the games at work?

**Dad:** Yes. I usually have my little radio with me at all times. Sometimes I have to turn it off if I'm busy with something. I tune in and try to catch up, because the game lasts quite a while. I don't know how many games I'll try to go to. We thought about getting season tickets and sharing them, but I don't think anyone can agree on where to get the seats. Because there are seats that I don't like. And different angles...there's some seats that I don't even care if they're in the 300-level, as long as there's nobody sitting in front of me. Like on the top edge, that would be a good place for me. I just don't like the crowds moving so much. If you're there to see the game, I like to sit and watch the game. I don't want to dodge people going in front of me.

**Sara:** (Laughs) Which you don't have to do with the radio.

**Dad:** Right. And I can visualize what's going on. Because I've played a lot of these positions myself, not at that level, but I can envision what's going on. It's a good feeling being there, at the games, and feeling that emotion from the fans. You can't get that on the radio, but you can hear it.

**Sara:** I know in the past you've done some superstitious things to help the Mariners win. Do you remember some of them?

**Dad:** Yeah. I always touch my Mariners' logo on my hat before I go to work. I don't wear my hat to work. I touch the "S."

**Sara:** Didn't mom buy you a hat once and you quit wearing it because they weren't winning?

**Dad:** No, it was a T-shirt. I've been breaking it in this winter when there's no games and I'm trying to get her to wash it so it feels older, and I'm hoping that this season I'll be able to wear it during the games. I'll have to see how it goes. Maybe I'll wear it during pre-season. I got to break things in. And there's one more thing I do too. I have an old Cheney stud emblem off one of my uniforms and I touch it too. [Ben Cheney was a sponsor of a team in the Boys Club youth league that existed in Tacoma when my father was growing up.] And then the year that they won 116 games every time it appeared they might not be in a winning position at the end of the game, if I held my water bottle and drank water from home when I was at work, they usually came back.

**Sara:** Wow.

**Dad:** But I don't have that water bottle anymore. It got pretty old. It was actually one of those bottles of water you buy, and I couldn't wash it in the dishwasher.

**Sara:** I know that you're upset with me for becoming an A's fan; you said you were going to disown me. Are you still upset at me? Is it because they're division rivals?

**Dad:** Well, I just keep hoping you'll come back to your senses. And I won't disown you, but I do have a picture of you in a Mariners T-shirt screaming at a game that I look at a lot.

**Sara:** I still like them, they're like my number two team.

**Dad:** Well that's not good enough.

**Sara:** You're really loyal to the team, but are there any players outside of the Mariners that you like?

**Dad:** Well, I enjoy seeing them play when they play the Mariners. I don't necessarily root for them. I like to see good plays. I don't want to see them hit well. But if they do good defense and get the Mariners out that's okay, I like to see that. But I don't root for anybody else.

**Sara:** The fans are really loyal there.

**Dad:** Yeah, except when you take a lot of money and leave the team. If he stayed for less money, and with the team, they'd be even more loyal. He could do no wrong when he was here. Really. I'm talking about Alex.

**Sara:** I know. It makes more sense that people are upset with him and not Ken Griffey or even Randy Johnson.

**Dad:** I feel bad about Randy Johnson. But I understood more because the ownership was bad.

**Sara:** Do you like the ownership more now?

**Dad:** I like how they're willing to spend money.



**Sara:** He doesn't even live in the country.

**Dad:** He doesn't even know anything about baseball. It's a business for him. And that's why they are spending the money.

**Sara:** Do you have any closing thoughts?

**Dad:** Closing thoughts...I think that players should know when to retire.

**Sara:** Who are you thinking of?

**Dad:** Dan Wilson.

**Sara:** Do you think that Edgar should have already retired?

**Dad:** I think that Edgar should retire when he feels like he needs to. They're not going to tell him because they're loyal to him. But he'll know.

**Sara:** When you said that I thought you were talking about **Roger Clemens**.

**Dad:** Well I just think that's a joke. I mean, if they didn't want to play for the Boss, they should have just quit.

**Sara:** You don't think it's funny?

**Dad:** I think it's a joke. Those guys...well, we're still on tape. (Laughs) I don't want to see them play. Either one of 'em. I don't like either one of them. They sell themselves out. I don't like that.

**Sara:** How do you sell yourself out if you go to a different team? It seems like you sell yourself out if you go to the Yankees.

**Dad:** They did it time and again. But I suppose you have to sell yourself...

**Sara:** I mean, do you like **Tino Martinez** now?

**Dad:** I've always liked Tino.

**Sara:** Even when he was a Yankee?

**Dad:** Yeah. I liked him when he was a Yankee. Because he didn't change.

**Sara:** I felt bad for him. It seems like they totally just threw him out so they could get **Jason Giambi**.

**Dad:** Yeah. I felt bad about that, too. That kind of shows you the type of management they have.

**Sara:** And I felt like they took **Aaron Boone** because they didn't want him to go to the Mariners.

**Dad:** I know. And now I hear that Alex is going to play third. That's a joke too. Especially when their fans are on Jeter because he doesn't have the range. Jeter needs to move to third.

**Sara:** I think Jeter needs to move to second. I don't think he can make the throw from third.

**Dad:** Oh. I don't watch him play enough to know that.

**Sara:** I think it's a joke to not put A-Rod at short.

**Dad:** What is A-Rod going to do, cover half of Jeter's area? How's that going to look? Okay, let's move Jeter right behind second. Alex can cover the rest of it.

**Sara:** Do you think that's going to go through?

**Dad:** Yeah, he's already made the statement that he wants to be there. He wants out of Texas really bad.

**Sara:** He shouldn't have gone there.

**Dad:** That's true. Anyway, I just think that's a big farce. And it's not going to work well. Did you see the commercial with Jeter and Alex playing wiffle ball in someone's living room?

**Sara:** No.

**Dad:** It was terrible. Let's put them all together so we can really laugh at all of 'em. Especially when they start fighting amongst themselves. **Joe Torre**, look out!

**Sara:** Do you have any predictions for the season?

**Dad:** I think that there's going to be a lot of surprises this year. They're already coming out with the predictions and I've seen them. *Sporting News* is predicting the Mariners to come in third—

**Sara:** Not behind the Angels.

**Dad:** They have the Angels first, A's second.

**Sara:** Give me a break.

**Dad:** That's what they're predicting. You know, it's not all pitching. But the Mariners have a good pitching staff, too. I don't know how many other teams have had five starting pitchers go the whole season and never miss a start.

**Sara:** Wow.

**Dad:** I don't know if that's a record. But it is for the Mariners. And they've got the same five guys coming back and Freddy has a lot to prove. I hate to predict them doing well and then be unhappy with my predictions, so I tend not to predict. I just like to see them play well. I know this might sound sacrilegious, but winning the World Series is important, but it's not the most important thing. You can play in it and it's still important. You can play up until the divisional series and it's all important. Baseball is important. It's not just who wins the Series. **Sara:** You look at some of the division games and they were better than any in the World Series.

**Dad:** Right. And it's how they play that seven games. You can insert different teams in that position and they'll play better. So, the whole season's important, not just the Series. That's the way I feel about it. If they could play baseball all year round, I'd be happy.

*Sara Dierck is a photographer and A's fan who moved from San Francisco to New York City in time to see the Yankees lose the World Series. She spends a considerable amount of time telling people why the Yankees suck and trying to convince her hockey-loving boyfriend that baseball is still great.*

## My Relationship With Baseball by Lisa Alcock

So much has happened in the off-season, much of it enraging, some of it depressing and some of it comical<sup>1</sup>. My brother and a few of my friends are so mad at the sport—the sheer stupidity of the owners (**Tom Hicks**) and the greediness of the players—that they've decided to give up on baseball for good. I've read the same news stories my brother and friends have, yet I remain hopeful about the state of baseball. Recently I have realized that my relationship with MLB is quite similar to several of my past dating experiences with men.

Initially, I get excited about the prospects of a new baseball season. Usually in December when [*Zisk staffer*] **Kip [Yates]** and I are well into NHL season we begin to count down the days until pitchers and catchers report. In the dead of winter nothing seems more exciting than the promise of a new baseball season. My head begins to fill with thoughts of sitting at Shea with friends on warm summer evenings, beer in hand, enjoying the game. Similarly, when a prospective gentlemen (and I use that term loosely, because there have been so few to fit that definition) enters my life the first few dates are exciting and I'm filled with glee at the new prospect.

Getting back to baseball...something happens to piss me off in general, like, say the greediness of players ("Pay-Rod" comes to mind) who have no team allegiance and go to whatever team is offering them the most money; or owners who think they can buy themselves a championship. (Last I checked there were 162 games, **Georgie**. That and you need some lefty pitchers.) I get mad and frustrated and wonder "Why isn't there a salary cap?" Or "Why can't every team begin on a level monetary field?" I bitch about the Yankees to anyone who will lend a compassionate ear. Sometimes during mid-season I give baseball the cold shoulder for awhile—limit myself only to watching games on TV. But I never give up on the sport. I remain hopeful. (Or is it naivety? Am I ignoring the blaring inherent problems within baseball?)

Like baseball, I bitch about dating. I have great dates with guys, we make plans to go out again, then they cancel on me and I never hear from them again. Or I have really terrible dates where there's no connection between me and the guy. I quit for periods, but I always come back.... forever hopeful, thinking that if I just keep trying maybe I'll meet a good one.

I agree with much of what Kip discusses in "Valentine's Day Massacre?" [See article elsewhere in this issue.]

However, I don't think I could give up on baseball. How could I? I've been with it for so long; I can't just quit cold turkey. I have many great childhood memories inextricably linked to baseball. I can't remember exactly how old I was when my family and I started going to downtown Detroit to the corner of Michigan and Trumbull to watch the Tigers. I remember being awed by **Trammell** and **Sweet Lou's** abilities to make double play after double play seem almost effortless. I played years of softball in grade school which solidified my love and understanding of the game of baseball. I was on teams that were similar to the *Bad News Bears*, but it didn't matter. I wasn't the best outfielder, but that's not the point. Amongst other things I was learning how to get along with my fellow teammates and play as a unit. We were playing because we enjoyed softball and the competition. It was my Mom who took me to K-mart to buy my first glove (it was a Cooper) and my Dad who showed me how to oil it and break it in. I cherish the times playing catch with my dad in my backyard. He taught me how to ground worm burners and catch pop flies in the setting sun during Michigan summers.

I guess I could be jaded by my past dating experiences, and be cynical about current or future dates, but I'm not. Experience has helped me understand what I want. Just as I could be jaded and cynical about the state of baseball, I'm not. Baseball has the potential to change and build upon past mistakes. I think things will get better for the both of us.

An outsider might wonder why I still date. They may call it blind stupidity, but I call it hope. Hope that something will work out. I also have hope for the sport of baseball. Hope for a salary cap, hope for better revenue sharing and hope that there are still a few baseball players out there who really love playing the game, and are as wide-eyed about the sport as I am.

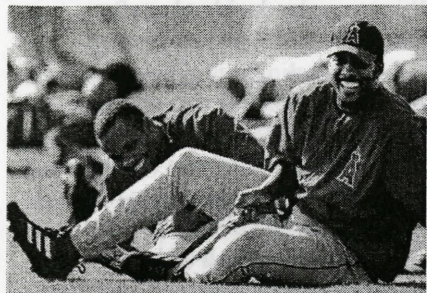
<sup>1</sup>I'd like to vote for my favorite couples of the season right now. For the NL: **Clemens** and **Pettitte**, and for the AL: **Jeter** and **Pay-Rod**.

By day, **Lisa Alcock** is a copyeditor at a legal publishing company. By night, she can usually be found at the gym, or at home watching *Law & Order* reruns and *SportsCenter*. Her dream job is to work at ESPN. It is also her dream to date **Mark Mulder**. The author would like to admit that she has not read the *Chicago Manual of Style* in its entirety. **Kip Yates** says of the author: "When she steps inside the white lines herself, she can also bring it!"



# The End of the American Pastime by Jonnie Whoa Oh

If you would have asked me what the present state of Major League Baseball was on February 13th, I would have told you that it's never been better. For three years in a row there have been different World Series Champions and two of them with payrolls below that of at least half of the teams out there. The trend of paying players obscene amounts of money seemed to be going



the way of the dodo with **Vladimir Guerrero** signing to what ended up being less money than he was originally offered by the Expos, and **Pudge Rodriguez**

taking a reasonable contract and trying to restore one of American's best markets to respectability in Detroit. It seemed that teams were fed up of these monstrous, overwhelming contracts that were hand cuffing them in the long run, and I really thought that the trend was going towards lower guarantees and more performance-incentive contracts. With all of these on-goings throughout the most exciting off-season in decades, I dismissed anyone who proposed a salary cap in baseball. In all fairness I'm a Mets fan and being in a major market where teams have money I've always been of the opinion if you have it, then spend it. In the last three years spending a lot of money (especially in the Mets case) if not the most money did not produce a championship or a playoff birth or even a .500 record. Keeping all this in mind I thought a salary cap was something that was good for other sports but was unnecessary in baseball.

If you would have asked me what the present state of Major League Baseball was on February 16, 2004, I would have told you that it's never been worse. I would have told you that the livelihood of the sport is teetering in the balance. I would have told you that one man's gluttony has been so short sighted that if it doesn't blow up in his face, it risks destroying a sport that has finally recovered from labor disagreements and strikes that has tainted its past. I would have told you that money is everything and if you have enough of it you can buy every player available regardless of cost or need and eventually buy yourself a championship.

The Yankees have six of the 12 highest paid players in the sport; that means that the other 30 teams have the same number. The Yankees infield costs more than 2003 World Championship Florida Marlins. The Yankees payroll is over 50% higher that of Boston (who has the second highest payroll) and nearly seven times that of the Royals. How are the Royals, Twins, Devil Rays, Tigers supposed to compete if all the best players will be bought by the Yankees?

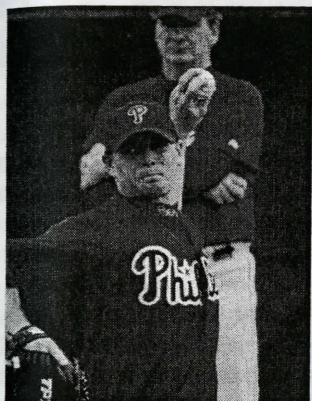
Could the Yankees have won the AL and the World Series without **Alex Rodriguez**? Yes. Did Boston bridge the gap some what this off season with **Schilling** and **Foulke**? Yes, but by no means are they guaranteed a championship. George has escalated the Cold War that we are in the midst of to the point of no return. The only way to achieve victory is to stockpile as many weapons as possible until the other side can't compete and they fold; all the while keeping your citizens afraid of the potential of losing and forcing propaganda down their throats to convince them that it's necessary to maintain their winning ways by any means necessary. By 1980 the USA and the USSR had the capability to destroy the earth 300 times over. On February 16th, 2004 the Yankees have the capability for any one of their #1-8 hitters to be the MVP of the league (by the way all of them have been All Stars). Ladies and gentlemen, this is the Evil Empire; an empire not built for winning, but rather built for total and complete destruction; not only of the destruction of its opponents, but of the very game itself. Yankees have set a course to outspend every other team until they have won every championship from here to eternity, to the point that no other team is even competitive. The outcome will not only be more titles for the Yankees but fewer fans all across the country. Fans will stop caring because they know that the excitement experienced this past season when the Cubs and the Red Sox nearly getting into the World Series might never again be a reality. This cannot go on for the greater good. It is evident what's necessary for the survival of America's past time.

A salary cap of \$75 million is the only solution that can potentially save a sport that lies in a cross roads of being annihilated. Figure with a 25 man roster \$75 million works out to be a \$3 million average. The concessions necessary by the Player's Association would be to lower the league minimum to \$200,000 and establish a maximum of \$10 million (adjusted annually for inflation



and cost of living). Now why would the player's association allow their players to take less money, that's un-American! The rationale is as follows: small market teams will go under when they can't compete and their fan base dries up. Economics tells us that there will be fewer jobs available with more players looking to fill them and salaries will decrease because in order to guarantee work players will be willing to take a pay cut rather than stay unemployed. The Player's Association can nip this economic trend in the bud by accepting these limits on salaries and protecting all of its players instead of just the highly paid ones.

With these salary restrictions having six of the 12 highest paid players in the game would be virtually impossible, if they each were to make the maximum. A direct repercussion would be phasing out specialists because each player would have to earn their keep and salary by doing more. The insurance policies called closers would be forced to pitch more than just the 9th. This change would speed up the game because managers would expect relief pitchers to do more than face one batter (they



couldn't pay these pitchers as much as they could in the past, \$10 million for **Billy Wagner** leaves you only with \$65 million) and that would mean fewer pitching changes in an inning and probably more intentional walks to get better match ups, and more base runners equals more excitement. A salary cap will continue the trend of bargain shopping like Boston did last season

and most other teams have done this off-season by picking up non-tendered players. It will also push for more incentive contracts in the sense that the teams would have to budget for the maximum amount on the contract but if Vladimir Guerrero doesn't reach, let's say, the 500 plate appearances necessary for the full contract value to kick in, the club could apply that money to next year's budget. The stipulations would be that the amount could only carry over for one year and that it would be lost if the player is traded in the off-season (preventing teams from stockpiling players who didn't reach their maximum and spending that money on other players). The frugality of the game will affect the fans in the sense that ticket prices will decrease since the owners won't have to spend as

much and this could potentially increase attendance. Couple this the achieved parity and the casual fan will have cause to believe that their team has a chance. No Yankee fan is going to stop watching because their payroll has decreased by two-thirds, but more Devil Rays fans will take the time to follow their team if there's a greater chance that they'll actually win. Interest from causal fans breeds hardcore fans in a short time. Hardcore fans preserve the livelihood and the life of the game.

The next part of the equation is increased revenue sharing. Revenue sharing will make the \$75 million budget attainable for the smaller market teams. The current system is a good start but the "haves" don't give enough to the "have-nots" in the case that they are under the luxury tax threshold. Since there would be no way to be over the \$65 million cap, an arbitrary number like 3% of TV and radio revenue will go into a fund that would be divided evenly between every team thus leveling the playing field for smaller markets.

The final step should be to get rid of all deferred money. I can't buy a ticket for \$20 and then pay the rest of the \$25 in 2008, so why should owners? This way contract values can't argued over by the Player's Association. (Such as how much is it worth for a team to link your personal website?) This will shore up budgets in the present and future but not allow teams to overextend themselves now as well as further down the line creating stability in the franchises.

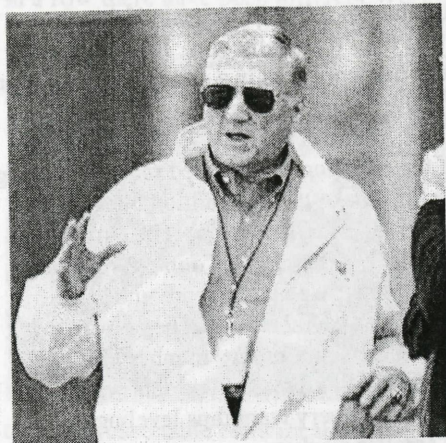
Salary caps work; you need to look no further than the NFL or the NBA—both leagues not only have a constant changing variety of teams competing for the title but also have shown that even within salary caps it is possible to build dynasties. You also have more teams competing for a playoff spot later in the season than you see in baseball. These factors increase fan base and the strength of the sport. If the same team wins all the time (especially running away) then fans stop caring and sport will eventually die. Everyone loves a winner but everyone loves the underdog knocking off the top dog even more.

Baseball is standing in the midst of its most crucial crossroads in many years and its survival hinges on how quickly it embraces a salary cap and brings the spending and salaries back to earth. Monopolies were ruled to be un-American yet they are perfectly acceptable if you are a Yankee fan.



# Some Bitter, Bitter Winter 2003 Baseball Thoughts by Jeff Herz

I can't stand A-Rod and it has nothing to do with the Red Sox.



It is currently December 16, 2003 at about 1:00 pm. I am jazzed to be thinking and talking about baseball in mid-December. It is about six to eight weeks until pitchers and catchers report and I am excited about what is

happening. Don't get me wrong, as a life long devoted Yankee fan, I think what **George Steinbrenner** is doing to the Yankees is a travesty. He has stopped listening to his baseball people and is acting like a rotisserie owner, looking for the best player at every position. As of this morning, the Yankees have, or are about to have, up to 17 former all-stars on their roster. It will be interesting to see if this fantasy roster can morph into team and do what it takes to justify the money the owner is spending, and everyone who has followed baseball in the last 10 years knows the only goal is winning the World Series. I hope we are not sitting on a redeux of 1982—the last time King George took over and stopped listening to his baseball people. This resulted in 13 years of no playoffs and the eventual suspension of Mr. Steinbrenner, which ultimately led to this current Yankee dominance.

I will concede that the Red Sox were the better team in the playoffs and should have won game 7, if **Grady Little** had pulled the trigger on **Pedro** sooner. In the ALCS, the Red Sox bullpen was lights out. They were using **Timlin** in the 8th and **Williamson** in the 9th. It was a good combination that worked. If there is one thing I have learned from watching **Joe Torre** for the past eight years is that you rely on what is working and if that means pulling an ace, you pull him. You have to have the balls to pull the trigger, Grady Little failed to do that and therefore the Red Sox failed. The Red Sox management realized this and quickly terminated Little in the off-season.

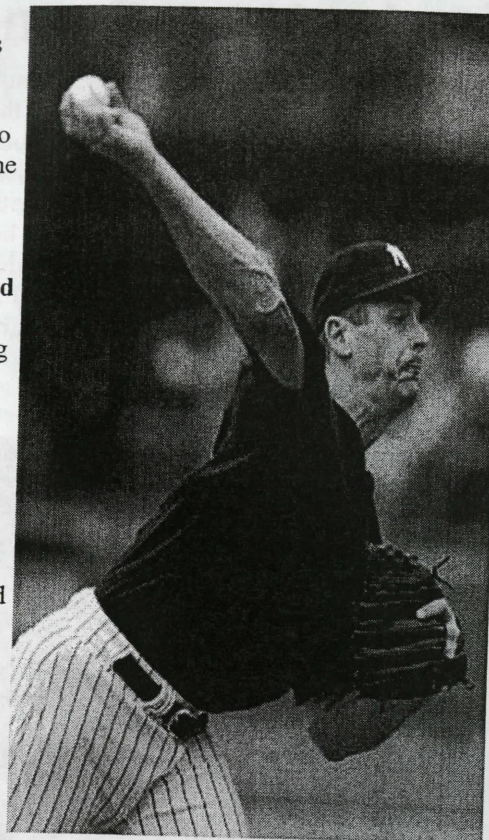
With that in mind, the off-season has seen the continuation of the Yankees vs. the Red Sox, this time with team management taking center stage. The Sox struck first by acquiring **Curt Schilling** (who



Steinbrenner wanted to replace the "retiring" **Roger Clemens**) from the D'backs for a bunch of nobodies. I have to admit, I am a little disturbed by the fact that other teams try screw over the Yankees (like when the D'backs asked for **Nick Johnson** and **Alfonso Soriano** for Schilling) and then turn around and give the same player away to another team for significantly less, but I guess that is another issue. The Yankees then countered by getting the younger **Javier Vazquez** from the Montreal / San Juan / Monterrey / Portland / DC / Northern Virginia National League baseball club being run by the other 29 MLB teams for Johnson, outfielder **Juan Rivera** and the almost never-used left handed reliever **Randy Choate**.

Then the Yankees maybe agree to terms with **Gary Sheffield**, then again maybe they don't. The Yankees call **Vlad Guerrero** to inquire about his price and Sheffield acquiesces. While all this is going on the Yankees sign enough relievers to pay for the Milwaukee Brewers entire payroll (Yankees bullpen = \$40 million, Brewers projected payroll = \$30 million). The Yankees (read Steinbrenner) then commit a mortal tactical mistake by allowing **Andy Pettite** to walk away. They spin the situation by saying they never had a chance since he only wanted to play at home for the Astros, but anyone who

follows the team knows that history means something to Pettite and he had the opportunity to surpass **Whitey Ford** as the all-time winning Yankee left hander. So the Yankees then go and trade **Jeff Weaver**, some non-prospects and cash for **Kevin Brown**. As the last move, the Bosox then sign free agent **Keith Foulke**, giving them a legitimate closer for the first time in years. I guess you won't see the closer by committee this coming year in Beantown.



What does any of this have to do with Alex Rodriguez? Well I am sure you are aware, while this entire New York-Boston chest thumping thing is going on there are tumors that grow stronger and weaker depending upon the lay that say A-Rod is coming and Manny is going. Now if the shitty Texas Rangers and the AL club from Boston can work an amicable trade (which I question) that works in both clubs favor, what can I do? Quite frankly, I am not sure what Steinbrenner can or will do to counter this move considering the Yankees now have a former all-star every place on the field and a butt-load in the pitching rotation and bullpen, but again that is a different issue though from a one-up concept, I am interested in seeing what he does.

That gets my goat, is A-Rod signed this ridiculous contract a few years ago, saying what a great organization the Rangers had and why he was looking forward to

spending the rest of his career there and helping bring a World Series title and making them champions. Now, I called it bullshit at the time, and I am still calling it bullshit since it always has been and remains about the \$252 million (a quarter-billion dollars) contract he signed. This contract paralyzed the Rangers making it impossible to sign any other decent talent (and I hold **Chan Ho Park** as exhibit one). Now that they have hired **Buck Showalter** as the manager and his job is to develop talent and build for the long haul, and what is A-Rod's response "I want out."

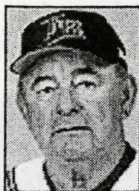
He is telling anyone who will listen that he would love to play in Boston, and honestly who wouldn't consider how the two beasts of the east are positioning themselves. I am sick to death of over-paid athletes signing contracts to play a game we the fans all love, then complain when their teams don't win. Rather than ask to be traded, why not defer money past his playing days so the Rangers can compete now. All he does is whine. He knew the consequences of signing that contract, and if he did not, shame on him. He has essentially forced the Rangers hand into making a deal because he is making clear that this team is no longer for him. That shit ain't right, and that is why I cannot stand A-Rod, and I will dislike him even more if he winds up with the Red Sox. The trickle down effect is the Red Sox are then going to screw Nomar right out of Boston.

By the way—the baseball writers of America have no clue what a most valuable player is since they voted for this jackass this year. Would the Texas Rangers have been any worse if this hump was traded before the 2003 season? No, they would have been the same: last place in the AL West. I agree that the AL MVP was a wide-open race in 2003, but the winner should have come from a competitive team where their presence significantly helped the team. **Shannon Stewart** from the Twins would have been a much better choice. **John Flaherty** would have been a better selection, since he had some influence on the Yankees pennant.

As a final thought, has anyone else noticed how strong the AL East has become? The Orioles have already signed **Miguel Tejada** and **Javy Lopez**. The Blue Jays have four solid starting pitchers (**Halladay**, **Hentgen**, **Lilly**, and **Batista**) and a very young, talented offense. For as much as the Yankees and Red Sox are duking it out, the AL East is potentially up for grabs more so this year than any year in the past six years.



# The Comedy of Baseball by Steve Reynolds



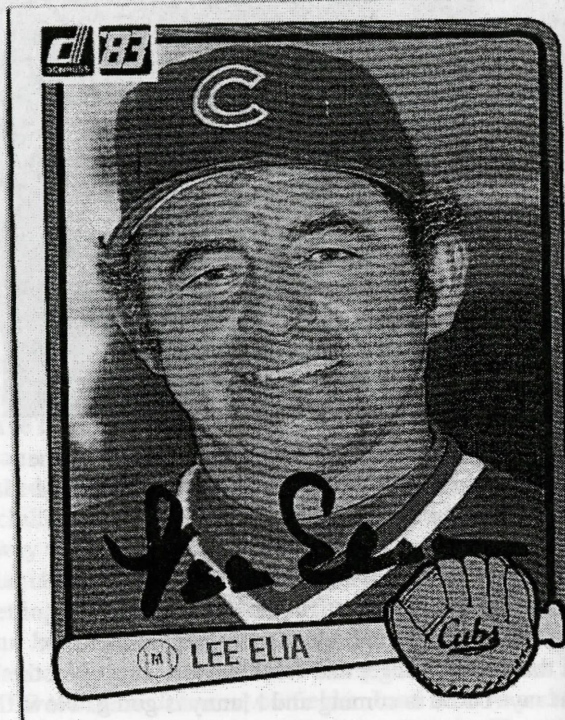
Baseball managers throughout the years have made their mark by implementing great strategy (which ends up being copied by others), by coaxing the best out of less talented players and knowing exactly when to juggle their lineups. Some managers make their mark by using the f-word *a lot*. And so we present the transcript of Cubs manager **Lee Elia's** legendary April 29th, 1983 tirade. This occurred after a daytime loss to the Los Angeles Dodgers at pre-lights Wrigley Field. Fortunately for us, local radio reporter **Les Grobstein** was there with his tape recorder, making his own **Zapruder** moment.

"Fuck those fucking fans who come out here and say they're Cub fans that are supposed to be behind you, ripping every fucking thing you do. I'll tell you one fucking thing, I hope we get fucking hotter than shit, just to stuff it up them 3,000 fucking people that show up every fucking day, because if they're the real Chicago fucking fans, they can kiss my fucking ass right downtown and PRINT IT.

"They're really, really behind you around here...my fucking ass. What the fuck am I supposed to do, go out there and let my fucking players get destroyed every day and be quiet about it? For the fucking nickel-dime people who turn up? The motherfuckers don't even work. That's why they're out at the fucking game. They oughta go out and get a fucking job and find out what it's like to go out and earn a fucking living. Eighty-five percent of the fucking world is working. The other fifteen percent come out here. A fucking playground for the cocksuckers. Rip them motherfuckers. Rip them fucking cocksuckers like the fucking players. We got guys busting their fucking ass, and them fucking people boo. And that's the Cubs? My fucking ass. They talk about the great fucking support the players get around here. I haven't seen it this fucking year. Everybody associated with this organization have been winners their whole fucking life. Everybody. And the credit is not given in that respect.

"All right, they don't show because we're 5 and 14...and unfortunately, that's the criteria of them dumb fifteen mother-fucking percent that come out to day baseball. The other eighty-five percent are earning a living. I tell you, it'll take more than a 5 and 12 or 5 and 14 to destroy the makeup of this club. I guarantee you that. There's some

fucking pros out there that wanna win. But you're stuck in a fucking stigma of the fucking Dodgers and the Phillies and the Cardinals and all that cheap shit. It's unbelievable. It really is. It's a disheartening fucking situation that we're in right now. Anybody who was associated with the Cub organization four or five years ago that came back and sees the multitude of progress that's been made will understand that if they're baseball people, that 5 and 14 doesn't negate all that work. We got 143 fucking games left.



"What I'm trying to say is don't rip them fucking guys out there. Rip me. If you wanna rip somebody, rip my fucking ass. But don't rip them fucking guys because they're giving everything they can give. And right now they're trying to do more than God gave 'em, and that's why we make the simple mistakes. That's exactly why."

*Steve Reynolds is the senior editor of Zisk and is known to curse as much as Lee Elia on occasion, especially when the Mets lose and the Yankees win. And he apologizes to Mike's mom. He really likes the chocolate chip bars she makes.*

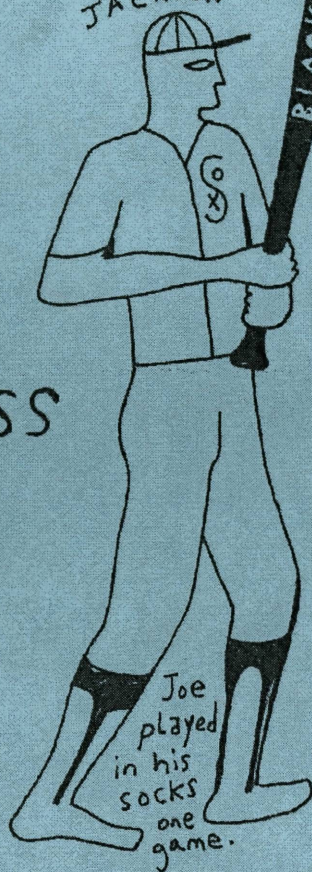


# The Curse of the 1919

BETTING  
SCANDAL

career  
ave.  
356

JACKSON



# BLACK SOX

by  
SLINK  
MOSS

This curse is  
so disturbing  
and devastating...  
Say it ain't so.  
Joe was innocent!



Shoeless  
Joe  
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