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Perspectives

Oregon Daily
Emerald



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Memories and baseball are the fields of dreams

The time had come. It was the day where I was to venture out of the comforts of my home and into the unpredictable future of the University of Oregon.

My parents were being strong, holding back the emotion of letting their eldest son go.

I looked over in our jam-packed garage and spotted my dad's baseball glove. I brought it out, along with mine, and said rather softly, "Hey Dad, you wanna have a catch?"

With a simple nod he agreed and there we were. In the backyard of our home with my mom watching on with a smile. A big change was about to take place in our family, but at that mo-

ment, the future was put on hold while a father and his son evoked memories of the past.

Of the times where my dad and his friend would spend countless hours in the backyard in San Diego playing intense games of whiffle ball against their two six-year old sons.

Of the many nights spent at Jack Murphy Stadium watching our beloved San Diego Padres play.

Not many words were spoken between my dad and I during our 10-minute catch that day, but no words were necessary. The memories that filled our mind were enough.

In the purest sense of the

word, this was our way of expressing love.

This "Field of Dreams"-type father-son bonding is one of the many reasons why baseball will always truly be America's favorite pastime.

The great thing about baseball is that it has remained a significant part of American culture and life. No other sport can boast the rich history of baseball. A history full of stories so legendary that they seem fictional. It has always been a game where the impossible seems possible. The love of the game is a sensation that can't even come close to being described in words.

The sad thing is, no matter how many people love the game, there seem to be equally as many people who just don't understand it. Too slow they say. Too boring. Not enough action.

Fine, I respect your opinion. But the people who say that are missing the point. Baseball has been around for some 160 years and will continue to be around for 160 more. The future of the game is in its ability to captivate the young players who will carry this game in their hearts long after they stop playing.

It is a perfect symbol for the American culture because it goes beyond the simple sport of it all. It delves deep into the heart of each and every person who lets it in and has the amazing ability to open up a childlike passion in an 80-year-old that a 10-year-old can understand.

But so often people don't let it in. They complain about summers because basketball season is over and football season seems so far away. But that's just the problem with the United States today — it's too hectic. Always hustling and bustling around with no apparent destination.

Which for me has always been the biggest appeal to baseball. It forces an easy-going pace on you and makes you wait nine innings for that delicious moment when, "with Jimmy safe at second, and Flynn a-huggin' third, the mighty Casey at long last, advances to the bat."

And sure, as in the poem "Casey at the Bat," sometimes there may not be joy in Mudville because Mighty Casey has struck out. But what is perhaps the greatest thing of all about baseball is that there is always a tomorrow, always a different day to start anew.

I will leave you with a favorite quote of mine from former baseball commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti, who passed away in 1989. A quote that uniquely identifies what it is about the game that leaves people enchanted.

"It breaks your heart. It is designed to break your heart. The game begins in the spring, when everything else begins again, and it blossoms in the summer, filling the afternoons and evenings, and then as soon as the chill rains come, it stops and leaves you to face the fall alone."

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Emerald photo illustration

Baseball, shmaseball — pastime is past its time

Was baseball's All-Star game on Tuesday night? Oops, missed it. Had to clip my nails and wash my hair. And, um, whatever else to preoccupy my time.

Not to say that baseball is a boring sport. OK, it is to say that baseball is a boring sport. But I respect those who have found deeper meaning in America's "pastime." I just haven't found those Zenesque qualities yet.

And I've tried. I remember watching Atlanta when they really sucked — and not just when they played the New York Yankees in the World Series. We're talking back in their early Turner Broadcasting days, when Dale Murphy was roaming the outfield and Buddha Bob Horner — an anti-athlete in

body shape if there ever was one — belted the occasional monster home run.

I was even living in Atlanta in 1995, when the team won its first world championship in 38 years, although it was the first one since the franchise moved from Milwaukee. The score in the sixth and final game? 1-0. Really now, does that sound like a captivating game?

Fans of the sport would respond with a resounding "yes" to that question. What can be more exciting than a game hanging in the balance until the final fly ball is gloved and then secured, sparking an all-out rush to the pitcher's mound by the winning team, fans in the stands going wild and grown men seen

crying in the dugouts?

Well, how about last year's Super Bowl, which ended on a thrilling note, with Tennessee receiver Kevin Dyson ending up 6 inches from the goal-line as time ran out on the Titans' chances for a trophy? Or how about the plethora of basketball games that Michael Jordan ended with his patented jump shot?

What's the most charged up moment on the diamond? When someone cracks a home run. Then he jogs around the bases.

And what about some of the more common baseball jargon? Slow rollers, drag bunts, lazy fly balls. Makes a person want to commit a suicide squeeze.

I understand baseball's whole connection to the father-son relationship. Yes, it is a nice feeling to get those pitching pointers or fielding tips from Dad and then put them to use in a game. No doubt that there are many more fathers teaching their kids how to turn a double play than ones who are showing their youngsters the best way to slam an opponent to the turf.

That, I think, is at the core of why baseball is so revered. Because we can all go to the local playing field and fantasize about being Chipper Jones or Ken Griffey, Jr., without too much effort. Try to hit a hole in the offensive line the way Terrell Davis does or jam a ball with

the same intensity as Kobe, however, and the magic just doesn't appear as easily.

Another one of baseball's drawbacks is the season's length. One hundred and sixty two games to decide a division winner? Wake me up after the 150th game and let me enjoy a good pennant race, but please don't expect me to pay attention to a full season of 2-1 ball games. (OK, in all fairness, the basketball season is just as long and laborious to get through, but each game in the NFL season has drama related to the final standings.)

For some fans, baseball season has this numbing effect on them and they begin to talk in this strange language — "Well, you know, when pitching in an east-to-west direction, Randy Johnson had a 1.12 ERA against right-handed batters that have last names beginning with the letter Q."

The Elias Sports Bureau is not my friend.

Fans also try to paint baseball as the perfect sport because of its structure: with no time limit and at least 51 outs needed to complete a game, a game of infinite length is always a possibility.

Just imagine, an endless number of pick-off attempts. Wow.

Jack Clifford is the Oregon Daily Emerald's editor in chief.

THE WEEK IN THUMBS



To George W. Bush
The presidential candidate declared that "strong civil rights enforcement will be a cornerstone of my administration" in a speech at the NAACP annual convention. Despite facing a skeptical audience, Bush made his points.

To a promising Alzheimer's vaccine

The vaccine reverses some damaging effects of the devastating brain disorder in animals and appears safe in the first tests on people. The vaccine, which is experimental, sparked excitement as a new approach to treating the incurable disease.



To Notre Dame
The South Bend, Ind., school is trying to steal our basketball coach from his beloved alma mater. Not only did Ernie Kent guide the Ducks to only its second NCAA Tournament appearance since 1961, but he also has a recruiting class coming in that was ranked No. 1 in the West. So, Notre Dame, look elsewhere! You haven't earned the right to call him your coach.

To a second attack on abortion doctor

A doctor who was once shot by a suspected anti-abortion activist was wounded in his office Tuesday by a knife-wielding attacker. The as-



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