

### Commentary

# Baseball is Still a Game

I have been depressed lately.

Opening day for baseball was Tuesday and nobody really seemed to care. Of course the parks were full, peanuts were sold and the fans did the wave. But still, the opening-day feeling was not there.

You know that feeling. After being teased by watching spring training games on television, you anticipate the first real pitch of the new season. To hear the first strike barked out by the umpire is like music to your ears. Witnessing a batter connecting with a pitch for the first home run of the year is like a joyous rebirth of the soul.

It is a sense of freshness.

This year that feeling of anew has changed to apathy where baseball is concerned. The majority of people in the U.S., sports fan or not, have put baseball on the back burner and have gone on with their lives.

Why?

The answer is fairly self-explanatory. People have come to realize that baseball is a business. It is a business that rewards below-average employees, rapes the smaller markets and has forgotten the people who made it mean something.

This is why the fans do not care about baseball anymore. The players, who are mainly over-priced whiners looking for bigger pieces of the pie, have forgotten the fans. The owners, who have always taken the fans for granted, have also forgotten the fans.

Off the Bench

MICHAEL  
MELISSA

And while the player-versus-owner struggle continues, the fans sit idly by waiting for both sides to resolve the conflict.

The fans' patience is waning though. People are becoming bored with the bickering.

But as fans, we need to understand one thing—we loved the game because it was just a game. We shouldn't hate baseball because of the owners or the players. We should love baseball for itself.

Baseball is a mystical game. It is the only sport where the defense controls the ball, there is no time clock that the participants have to play against and the boundaries are two white lines and a fence.

How can we not love this game? It has meant so much to so many of us. There is a wealth of childhood memories that are directly related to baseball—be it playing catch with your parents in the backyard or getting that first hit in little league.

If I close my eyes real tight, and thought about it real hard, I could remember my first hit. I swung a bat that was almost as tall as me and it collided with the ball, sending it careening into the outfield like a dying quail.

I ran around first base yelling, "I got a hit! I got a hit!" I was so proud of myself.

I was picked off the base a moment later.

This is probably why I cannot understand people who say they don't like baseball anymore. I have seen sports publications filled with letters asking why we should care about baseball when the sport obviously could care

less about the fan.

There is no one answer for the people. Instead there are many. Baseball is Ty Cobb stealing home, Babe Ruth calling his shot, Joe DiMaggio batting safely in 56 straight games, Ted Williams batting .406 for the season, Willie Mays making over-the-shoulder catches, Sandy Koufax striking out batters with precision, Roger Maris hitting 61 homers, Reggie Jackson being Mr. October and Kirk Gibson hitting a shot that stymied the Oakland Athletics.

That's not it though. To us, the simple fans, baseball is little league games on Saturday morning, a sandlot with paper bags as the bases, mothers complaining that their kid is not getting enough playing time, listening to a Major League game past bedtime on a school night and parents screaming at the umpire for calling their kid out. There is so many different things that make baseball special to us. There is no way to list everything.

Baseball has been with us for so long, it's hard to forget about it. To just ignore the diving catch in center field, the no-hitter, the mammoth home run and the game-ending strikeout is impossible. It has a hypnotic power over us, and we just can't brush it off like lint.

It's not the players or owners that make baseball. It is baseball that makes baseball.

—Michael Melissa is a sports reporter at The Rebel Yell.

## Competition Set for Friday

The UNLV football team will hold its second-annual Rebel Mania this Friday at 5 p.m. in the North Gym.

The events include weightlifting, agility and wrestling.

The purpose of Rebel Mania is to allow those individuals who have worked hard in the off-sea-

son an opportunity to strut their stuff in competition and have some fun while doing it.

The 1994 Big West and Las Vegas Bowl Champions will await the opening of Camp Horton this summer at Rebel Park.

—Kevin C. Lewis

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Gatewood set an NCAA record last fall with 23 catches during the Rebels' Sept. 17 game against Idaho at Sam Boyd Stadium.

Washington gets the opportu-

nity to earn a spot on the Vikings and battle away in the storied "Black and Blue" NFC Central Division. He was signed by the team on Tuesday.

Kicker Nick Garritano has been in contact with the Washington Redskins, according to UNLV coach Jeff Horton.

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