

# You Don't Know Who Ty Cobb Was?

A baseball great. Record holder. In the first class of Hall of Fame players inducted in 1936. Lifetime batting average of .366 – the highest of all time. Three times batted over .400 for a season. Possibly the greatest player of the early 1900s.

Violent temper with a reputation for viciousness and thought to be a racist.

Some recent studies seem to indicate that some of the things thought to be true about him may not have been factual. (This may have been due to an inept and extremely biased biographer.)

Earlier biographers depicted Cobb as extremely violent, sharpening his spikes and endeavoring to slide into other players and cut them. He is said to have attacked blacks and sought to inflict bodily harm on them. Even Ken Burns of the famous video series *Baseball*, presented that picture of Ty Cobb. In the movie "Field of Dreams," the ghost player Shoeless Joe Jackson talks about not inviting Cobb to come to the magical field because "we hated the \_\_\_\_."

More recent studies seem to show that he was not hatefully racist, was respected by teammates and opponents alike and tried to graciously reach out to fans. He was, according to Charles Leershen, in "Ty Cobb: A Terrible Beauty," an extremely complex man, far from perfect, but not guilty of many of the things alleged in earlier biographies.

Ty Cobb was born in Georgia in 1886, just 21 years after the Civil War ended. He played for the Detroit Tigers, and because of his attitudes and actions, and being a Southerner, he may have created more problems for himself than he should have.

Interestingly enough, Jackie Robinson, who broke the color barrier in 1947, was also born in Georgia, 33 years after Ty Cobb. And recent information would seem to show that Cobb was not against African Americans playing in the major leagues. "The Negro should be accepted wholeheartedly, and not grudgingly," he said. "The Negro has the right to play professional baseball and whose [sic] to say he has not?" And he was proved correct in the years that followed as African Americans reshaped the all-time baseball statistics from that point forward.

Now while I am sure there are those who do, it is likely that most people in China, India, or the heart of Africa would not know who Ty Cobb really was; in fact, he or she would never have even heard of him. Fame is not only fleeting, it's also limited by time and place. In this case, the real and total truth about Tyrus Raymond Cobb is known only to God.

Historical facts, anecdotes, trivia and the like, are interesting, at least to some people, at certain times, and in at least a few places. They do serve as good attention grabbers, make for memorable illustrations, and help transition us to consider more important things. But only one bit of information and only one Individual makes any real difference.

It's not Ty Cobb who must be known – it's Jesus! Jesus, Name above all names. Jesus, who said of Himself "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the father but by me." Jesus, supernatural birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, and glorious, bodily resurrection, all to save people from their sins. Jesus, of whom it was said: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

If Ty Cobb remains unknown except for a small group of baseball aficionados and historians, it will make virtually no difference. But if Jesus is not known – and received – there

are eternal consequences. He tells us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. His name is to be proclaimed in all the earth.

Last, but certainly not least: we must clearly and accurately communicate the message. If indeed historians have missed the boat on what kind of person Ty Cobb was – intentionally or accidentally – that is sad, to be sure. However to miss the message of Jesus, or to transmit or receive a distorted message, is tragic.

There are still hundreds of millions of people who are not only unreached with the gospel – the only message that can save them, remember – but are still unengaged in the sense that no believer or group of believers is plotting a strategy to engage them with the gospel. There remain some 1,600 languages and dialects that do not have even a portion of the Bible. Thankfully, major efforts are underway to change that and get the Word to them in their tongue.

Ty Cobb was a great baseball player and a complicated person and while it is interesting to know who he really was and what he accomplished, that knowledge holds temporal importance. The same cannot be said about the most significant person to walk the face of the earth – Jesus Christ. We are to know Him and to make Him known to the uttermost ends of the earth. We should proclaim the Good News about Jesus with clarity, accuracy, and consistency. There is nothing more eternally significant than this.

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## **Five 20th Century Sports**

# Moments That Would've Blown Up Twitter

Imagine @FeuxBoPelini in 1992...

I love Twitter. During big events in the U.S. I've discovered (and tweeted) that the worse the event, be it a presidential debate or basketball game, the funnier Twitter is. I'm on Facebook to get people to pay attention to me. I'm on Twitter to pay attention to other people.

So I also love it when a sports moment causes Twitter to explode. Like the LeBron block in the 2016 Finals. Or the last out of the Cubs World Series win. Or when Peyton Manning put Kevin Durant on blast at the ESPYs the other night[1. I don't know if I'm using this correctly, but I think it is a hilarious idiom that I try to work into every conversation with my wife these days. God bless her.].

And I've been thinking about moments before 2008 that would have caused the biggest Twitter meltdowns. Jordan's "I'm Back" in 1995 would be a huge one. Franco Harris' Immaculate Reception vs. Oakland has been replayed a billion times. Kirk Gibson's 88 World Series Game 1 home run certainly. And the list could go on and on.

And it would be endless. So instead of trying to narrow down this list, I want to write about a similar but distinct list. I want to write about moments that were not THE story, but were a footnote in reality yet still would have trended on Twitter. For fans like me, they are unforgettable. And just imagining the tweets that would have come from them brings joy to my mind. Here are five:

***The Major Story: Dallas destroys Buffalo in Super Bowl XXVII***

**52-17, winning their first since the 70s and handing Buffalo their 3rd straight Super Bowl loss.**

***The Twitter Moment:* Don Beebe chases Leon Lett down from behind to prevent a meaningless TD at the end.**

This may be the loudest non-TD play in history for a game decided by 35 points. If you watched the game you remember it. Beebe instantaneously became a legend of team pride and hustle. He had no reason to keep running. The game was over. Lett became an instantaneous butt of jokes. He celebrated a few yards too early. The only thing it meant historically was that Dallas didn't set the record for most points in a Super Bowl. Yet as far as fan reaction, it meant a ton. Beebe's and Lett's names would have been at the top of the trending list and I can see the "Hold My Beer" tweets in my head.

***The Major Story:* Larry Bird steals Game 5 of the 1987 Eastern Conference Finals from Detroit and the Celtics go on to win in 7 to set up Celtics vs. Lakers III.**

***The Twitter Moment:* Dennis Rodman and Isiah Thomas say that Larry Bird would be just another player if he weren't white.**

Racial (and racist) comments are aplenty on social media and with U.S. History being as it is, that will always be the case. So I have little doubt that when Rodman made this comment that Thomas echoed that it would have caused a race war on Twitter the same way politics and athletes like Colin Kaepernick do today. The NBA in the 70s and 80s was a breeding ground for racial strife and I remember when this happened. It blew up. Thomas had to answer for it repeatedly to the national media, including to Bird's face at an impromptu press conference. Imagine how Twitter would have reacted.

To be honest, while it was not the wisest comment to make I do believe Thomas was joking in some sense and it was completely

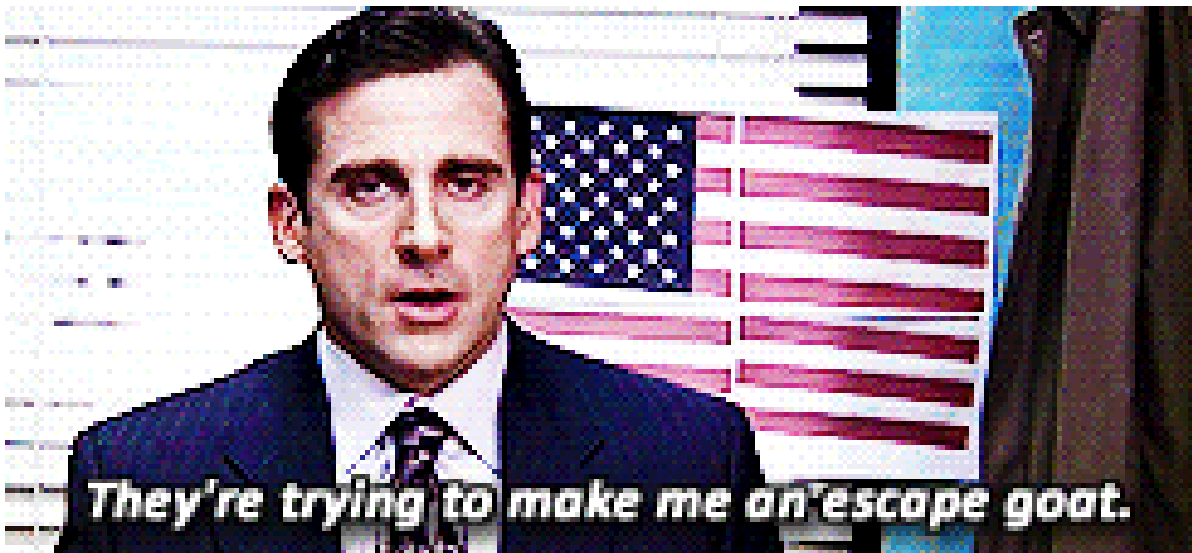
overblown. You have to hand it to Bird, too. He told the media that he didn't think anything of the comment and that they shouldn't either.



***The Major Story:* Hakeem Olajuwon averages 32-11-5, dominates Shaq and Houston sweeps Orlando in the 1995 NBA Finals**

***The Twitter Moment:* With under 10 seconds left in Game One and the score tied, Nick Anderson of the Magic misses 4 consecutive FTs.**

Sports can make you a hero and a goat, often within the same time frame. Just a couple of weeks prior, Nick Anderson had a moment of glory, stealing the ball from Michael Jordan in a play that became an image of that series, the only one that Jordan lost as a Bull after 1990[2. Though it was the year he came back near the end.]. But then Anderson had a chance to give Orlando the lead late in the first Finals game and missed two free throws, got his own miss, got fouled again and missed the the next two. My brain tells me not to feel bad for professional athletes but my heart does. I can easily envision a slew of hilarious Michael Scott gifs in response.



***The Big Story:*** In 1998, rookie Kerry Wood for the Cubs strikes out 20 Houston Astros, an MLB record, and holds them to 1 hit in a dominant pitching performance

***The Twitter Moment:*** The hit could have been ruled an error, giving Wood 20 K's AND a no-hitter in the same game, a feat that has never been accomplished.

You can watch it below and make your own judgment and you can hear the announcers say it looked like an error. I agree. I was not a Cub fan yet, still 4 years away from moving to Chicago. And at the time I felt the same. I can only imagine the hours and hours of Twitter debate this would have sparked.

***The Big Story:*** In the 1993 Sugar Bowl, underdog #2 Alabama romps defending champion #1 Miami 34-13.

***The Twitter moment:*** With Bama fully in control, the Tide's George Teague walks down Miami's Lamar Thomas and strips the ball.

This is not like the Lett play to me. It is in some ways: the

game was a blowout and a player got caught from behind. But it was the inverse of the play above and more than that, it was a statement. Alabama was given very little chance in this game. Miami was a 4-time champ and cocky. And Bama's defense destroyed them and their Heisman QB Gino Torretta. Here it finally looked like Miami would break the invincible Bama D and score a TD. And then Teague emasculated Thomas. The next we saw of Miami's trash-talking receiver, he was on the bench with a towel on his head. The play didn't even count but it absolutely encapsulates what happened that night. It would have brought a feast of tweets in reaction.

So, that's my list. What are some that I missed that you would have included?

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## **“It Started With a Bunt”: The 2016 Sports Year in Review**

It was such a crazy year in sports that I wouldn't be surprised to find out on Pottermore that the Chudley Cannons won the British and Irish Quidditch League Cup.

Okay, that will be my last Harry Potter comment. Because this year American sports proved yet again that truth will always be stranger than fiction. 2016 will go down as the most fascinating sports year ever and it's not even close. And I want to rehash the five main sports championships from this year in the big three sports, in chronological order:



## **You're Dixie's Football Pride, Crimson Tide**

I suppose it's appropriate that in a sports year where significant droughts ended, that it started off with a winner that has now won four of the last seven College Football National Championships, could easily win a fifth in two weeks, and has been THE college football program for the last 80 years (No apologies to Notre Dame whatsoever).

Fireworks led 2016 that warm Monday night in January in Glendale, AZ. [I predicted Alabama would beat Clemson 31-30.](#) I was close on margin, but even I still can't accurately predict scores in college football because I grew up in an era where teams didn't regularly put up 550 yards and 40 points of offense in a game.

And the 45-40 barnburner was one of the most exciting games I've ever seen. I don't know if it's one of the best I've watched, but it had no shortage of plot twists, bold coaching and NFL athleticism on display. There were five TDs in the fourth quarter alone. Jake Coker got smacked around and still threw for 335 yards. Deshaun Watson had nearly 500 yards of offense by himself. Kevin Dodd was spectacular. O.J. Howard was magnificent. Nick Saban gets another jewel in his coaching crown for turning the game at 24-24 with a brilliant special teams call.

Clemson lost but they still won in some ways, knowing they can tell recruits that they are toe-to-toe with Bama and were an unprecedented onside kick away from likely winning.

**Miller, Not Manning**

As exciting as was the College Football Playoff championship, the Super Bowl was equally as ugly and boring. It featured one offensive TD drive and a gazillion punts. [I've already dealt at length with Peyton Manning's legacy](#) so I won't go into that here. Plus, it's not the story of the Super Bowl. Manning wasn't even mediocre in the game; he was bad. The man of the hour was Von Miller, who was supported quite well by everyone else playing defense for Denver. They trashed Tom Brady pretty good in the AFC Championship and carried the inept offense yet again in the Super Bowl. Harassing Cam Newton all night, it was Miller who bookended the game with two strips of Newton that lead to both of Denver's touchdowns.

While it was sometimes ugly, it is still a thing of beauty watching a defensive lineman or linebacker destroy an offensive line and disrupt everything. I grew up watching Lawrence Taylor and Reggie White do it and I have no doubt this was a part of the appeal of the movie *Waterboy*. Von Miller really did look like Bobby Boucher at times, so much that I fully expected him to ask Manning during the postgame if he remembered that time Von Miller showed up at half time and the Mud dogs won the Bourbon Bowl.

Still, the Super Bowl and NFL playoffs were captivating as always and gave us story lines galore. Yet I doubt anyone knew how much better 2016 was going to get.

### **One Shining Moment Was the Final Moment**

I thought the 2016 NCAA Tournament produced a mixed bag. The first round featured the usual bevy of great upsets: 14 S.F Austin over 3 West Virginia, 12 Yale over 5 Baylor, 13 Hawaii over 4 Cal, and the biggest upset prize in first round

history: 15 Middle Tennessee St over 2 Michigan St. I personally think this was the biggest because no 2-seed that had ever lost in the first round had as much Final Four and Championship Contender hype as the Spartans. Plus, Michigan St. nearly always outplays their seeding. This was a bizarro world result.

The middle rounds induced tons of yawns, although Syracuse as a ten seed coming back to beat Virginia in the Elite Eight was a real treat and Villanova over Kansas that same round was intense. The two Final Four games gave us the biggest blow-out in Final 4 history (Villanova over Oklahoma by 44) and another blow-out (UNC over Syracuse by 17).

But then the championship redeemed it all. Villanova led UNC by 10 with about 5 minutes to go, 67-57, and I almost went to bed. But I thought about the dozens of times I've seen a college basketball team make up that deficit with that time and I stayed up. Boy am I glad I did. UNC came all the way back to tie at 74 with 4.7 seconds left on a double pump clutch three by Marcus Paige. That should have been the ultimate One Shining Moment, but it wasn't. Kris Jenkins then put his name in March Madness history next to Laettner, Jordan, Keith Smart and Bryce Drew with a way beyond NBA range 3-pointer at the buzzer to win.

**"DOUBLE ORDER, SAUTÉED!"**

Considering Laettner's shot was in the Regional Finals and Jordan's was with 17 seconds left, was this the biggest shot in tournament history? Time will tell[1. Spoiler: No shot will ever beat Laettner's.].

## The Biggest Collapse since Shooter McGavin Blew a 4-stroke Lead on the Back Nine

Ok, so I'm not really serious about that. I just love this Gameday sign so much:



It was made as a parody reaction to how many times people had talked about Golden St. blowing a 3-1 lead to Cleveland in the NBA Finals.

I suppose you could call it a choke. There is a case for that. Golden St.'s record setting offense was erased for nearly the final five minutes of Game 7 (that's not hyperbole; they scored 0 points the last 4:37). GS had 13 points in the fourth quarter of Game 5 and 13 again in the fourth of Game 7. Harrison Barnes literally shot 9% from the floor (2-22) in Games 5 and 6. Draymond Green's suspension was in part due to his hot head.

Yet this somehow felt different in other ways. In the classic huge comeback debate—did one team win or the other team lose—it feels more like Cleveland won than GS lost. Love him or hate him, LeBron put together a stat line for the ages: 30-11-9 for points, rebounds and assists per game for the series. Nearly a triple double in an epic Finals. He added 2.6 steals per game and 2.3 blocks per game and if you are reading this I doubt I have to elaborate on the block heard round the world in Game 7. I will say this though: It's been six months

and I still don't think people overreacted to it, as we often do in sports any more. It was an instant legendary play worthy of its accolades[2. Credit has to go to J.R. Smith as well for forcing Iguadala to alter his layup].

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N11oeH0Ihgg>

Then you have Kyrie Irving's three with 50 seconds to go. What a shot. Definitely the biggest since Ray Allen in 2013 and on the short list for biggest ever, since it was Game 7. And then you have to credit Cleveland's defense in the final three games. Now, I know some of you reading this will recall that there was (at least to some people) some shady refereeing at times during this stretch of games. I won't expound upon that too much, but I will say that people who know basketball best believe that Cleveland was getting away with some pulling and grabbing, especially on the perimeter[3. Yet you have to still credit Cleveland for getting away with it. Just like you have to credit Baltimore on San Francisco's final offensive play in Super Bowl XLVII for being aggressive and stopping the score. Cleveland did what they had to do defensively to shake up the Warrior's picture perfect offense.]

At the end of the day, the story is that a mega superstar forsook his home for greener pastures, humbled himself to come back and promised them a championship. And after 50+ years of failures in the big three sports—everything from fumbles to blown saves to getting torched repeatedly by Michael Jordan—the man delivered. Any other year LeBron James leading Cleveland in ending their 5-decade long title drought would be the runaway winner for story of the year. But 2016 wasn't like any other year.

## The Eye of the Cubbie

The Cubs won the World Series this year. Let that sink in.



Take hours if you need. Days even.

Has it sunk in yet?

For me it has!



Yes, it happened. It really happened. I watched it. I felt the chill bumps. I cried the tears. I heard the car horns all

night.

How do you analyze this? Especially when you're a fan? Through memories I suppose. What memory will I cherish the most as being integral to the Cubs' 108-year in the making run to winning the World Series?

Was it finding out that Anthony Rizzo had the Cubs listen to Rocky music and quotes in the clubhouse after going down 3-1 in the World Series?

Was it the HR's by Fowler, Grandpa and Baez in Game 7?

Was it seeing Schwarber defy the odds and not only play in the World Series but deliver clutch hit after clutch hit?

No, I'm going with the bunt:

"The Bunt." That's what it should be called. It's not but it should be. The play of the playoffs to me. All the way back in Game 4 of the NLCS vs. the Dodgers, Ben Zobrist ended 21 innings of frustration for the Cubs offense (0 runs over 2+ games) by laying down a perfect bunt. The Cubs scored 4 that inning, won the game and didn't lose again in the series. Here is what I wrote on Facebook that night:



And yes, I think we Cubs fans will look back years from now

and be thankful as much for that 40 foot dribbler as any 400 foot HR. Zobrist would end up being World Series MVP and he made an MVP play that night.

The Cubs making and winning the World Series was so significant that I did Facebook Live, which I hadn't done before and haven't done since. But it was a truly unique event in the last century of American sports history.

And it made 2016 special. It is only fitting that the Cubs won with the help of Rocky, who to me is the greatest fictional underdog story of our time. And in a year where a European soccer team beat 5,000 to 1 odds to win the Premiere league, and where a man took the weight of an entire city on his shoulders and ended 50 years of sports Hades, it was only fitting that for the last championship be won by the Cubs. Who credited Rocky.

What will 2017 bring? Will the Detroit Lions win it all? Will Alabama finally lose? Will someone other than Golden St. or Cleveland make the NBA Finals? I Don't know. But next year has a hard act to follow. 2016 was incredible in the truest sense of the word. I'm glad I was alive for it.





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# “I Remember”: Why I Love October Baseball

*[Author's Note: This article originally ran on October 13, soon after the Chicago Cubs beat the San Francisco Giants in the 2016 National League Division Series with a 3-run comeback win in the 9th inning of Game 4. Since then the Cubs have gone on to win the NL and the World Series and this article has been updated to reflect that.]*

I'll always remember Wednesday night.

Watching the Cubs end 108 years of futility was special. And not just that they did it, but how they did it. They lit up pitchers who had dominated this postseason. Fowler's lead off HR. Baez ending a terrible slump with a HR. Grandpa's HR to stop the bleeding in the 6th.

They also bounced back from a horrid 8th inning meltdown, which any other year would have sunk the Cubs. But not this team. They scored twice in the 10th and hung on just enough to send Chicago into an oblivion of celebration.

It wasn't just the World Series clinching game that brought memories of joy to this Cubs postseason. We also had the grand slam by Russell in Game 6. The bunt by Zobrist vs LA to get us out of a 21-inning funk. And the most miraculous of all—the 3-run 9th inning comeback vs. San Francisco in Game 4 of the NLDS, when it seemed like we were going to choke

again. As the Cubs had always done. But not this year. Not this Cubs team.

It's kind of poetic that my first October memory was of the team with the only other 3-run 9th inning comeback in the history of baseball's postseason. I was 8 years old but I remember so much about those '86 Mets. I especially remember the World Series. My dad, a lifelong Boston fan who at that point had endured 46 years of losing at the hands of the Red Sox and our beloved USC Gamecocks, let us stay up to watch some of it. Those who watched will never forget Game 6. Never. Buckner. Mookie Wilson. Ray Knight. The names, the sounds, the images. All legendary.

But I remember so much more after that, having watched the baseball playoffs every year since. So much stands out...

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## **I remember...**

..Game 1 of the 1988 World Series, Kirk Gibson hobbling to the plate in the 9th inning. I remember knowing that if he hit a grounder he would be out by a mile. I remember the stat flashing on the screen that Dennis Eckersley had not given up a home run since early August. I remember the feeling of watching one of the most iconic HRs in World Series history.

I remember Orel Hersheiser. I remember the reports of him singing Christian hymns in the dugout when he pitched. I remember finding my sports hero for the next 10 years that night.

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## **I remember...**

...Minnesota's Kent Hrbek pulling Atlanta's Ron Gant off the bag in the 1991 World Series and the outrage my family and I felt as Braves fans (apart from my dad who was pulling for the Twins). I remember my dad saying as the Twins Mike Pagliarulo came to bat in Game 4, "Here comes a run" and then watching Pagliarulo hit a HR. I remember the look of utter glee on my dad's face. And the inevitable gloating. You have to know my dad to appreciate the joy that was on his face that night. I remember Jack Buck's call at the end of Game 6. I remember Lonnie Smith getting fooled by the hidden ball trick in Game 7 and getting stranded on third, for what would have been the World Series winning run. I remember Jack Morris pitching the most incredible, clutch game I've ever seen—10 innings of shut out baseball in Game 7 of the World Series.

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## **I remember...**

...3rd String catcher Fransisco Cabrera coming to back in Game 7 of the 1992 NLCS in the bottom of the 9th with the bases loaded as the Braves trailed Pittsburgh 2-1 with two outs. I remember the hit. I remember Barry Bonds could not throw out Sid Bream, who actually lost a race for slowest man on Atlanta's team, and scored from 2nd. I remember the Sports Illustrated photo of Pirates CF Andy Van Slyke sitting motionless on the field after the game, completely stunned, trying to process what just happened. It was as clear a picture of the agony of defeat that I've ever seen.



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## **I remember...**

...in the 1996 World Series, the Braves got up two games to one and were leading Game 4 at home 6-0 in the 6th. I remember the Yankees scoring three in the 6th. And I remember Braves 100-MPH throwing closer, Mark Wohlers, facing Yankee back up catcher Jim Leyritz in the 8th with two men on. I remember Leyritz fouling back two fastballs before Wohlers threw him a slider, that Leyritz blasted out of the park and turned the World Series on a dime. I remember Joe Buck's epic call of "WE..ARE...TIED!" I remember the next night hearing Tim McCarver (who I never liked) say something I'll never forget about Wohlers not throwing the fastball again and throwing the off speed pitch instead: "Wohlers did what Leyritz could not do for himself; he sped up his bat."

I remember the Yankees continually bringing in an otherwise unknown reliever named Graeme Lloyd to face Ryan Klesko, lefty vs. lefty, and Lloyd getting Klesko out every time, in crucial spots.

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## **I remember...**

...the late Tommy Gregg umpiring Game 5 of the 1997 NLCS and having a strike zone for Marlins starter Livan Hernandez so big that I thought that Atlanta's Fred McGriff could not have hit some of his pitches with a 50-inch bat.

I remember Jose Mesa coming to the mound for Cleveland in the 1997 World Series vs. those same Marlins, with the chance to save Game 7 and end decades of sports futility for a whole city and watching him blow the save. Cleveland would wait nearly 20 years for it to finally end.

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## **I remember...**

...everything about the 2001 World Series. I remember it beginning late into October due to delays after the 9-11 attacks. I remember Game 4 starting on October 31st and going extra innings and past midnight EST. I remember Derek Jeter hitting a 10th inning, Game-winning HR off of Byung-Hyun Kim and a Yankee fan in the stands holding up a recently made sign that said, "Mr. November". One of the most surreal moments I can recall watching baseball.

I remember Scott Brosius hitting a game-tying 2-run HR in the 9th inning off of Kim the next night. I remember Bob Brenly coming to the mound to take Kim out of the game. I remember Kim crouching and hanging his head in shame after blowing two consecutive saves in the World Series. I remember never ever having felt so badly for a professional athlete.



I remember the greatest post season pitcher ever come to the mound to save Game 7 and the Series for the Yankees. I remember thinking, "Mariano Rivera is coming in. It's over." I remember Rivera's throwing error. I remember Tony Womack got the biggest hit of the inning. I remember Luis Gonzalez hit it just hard enough past a drawn in infield to drive in the Game 7, World Series winning run. I remember being in Goen Hall of Free Will Baptist Bible College and the room exploding with joy. I remember shouting "They lost! They lost!" since the Yankees had won 4 of the previous 5 championships.

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## **I remember...**

...the exact spot I was standing at on Waveland Ave. outside of Wrigley Field, when Moises Alou missed a foul ball in Game 6 of the 2003 NLCS that prompted the mother of all playoff meltdowns. I remember never feeling sicker over a sports result. I remember thinking how fascinating it was that in back to back nights, the Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs both lost Game Six's, up three runs, 5 outs away form the World Series, with their aces on the mound. Curses felt real that week.

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## **I remember...**

..."19-8 Yankees" in Game 3 of the 2004 ALCS. I remember thinking, "It's over. The Yankees always win and the Red Sox always lose". I remember The Steal by Dave Roberts in Game 4 in the 9th inning. I remember Mueller's single. I remember Ortiz ending it in the 12th.

I remember Ortiz ending it the next night as well, in the 14th inning. I remember the bloody sock. I remember Johnny Damon, with his Jesus like appearance that everyone raved about, hitting a Grand Slam in the 2nd inning of Game 7, making everyone say, "This is going to happen. The Red Sox are going to come back from down 3-0 and beat the Yankees."

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## **I remember...**

...St. Louis catcher Yadier Molina breaking a 1-1 tie in the 9th inning of Game 7 of the 2006 NLCS vs. the Mets with a 2 run home run. I remember the sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach that the franchise I hated so much was going back to the World Series. I remember Endy Chavez robbing the Cardinal's Scott Rolen of a HR earlier that game and thinking, "It's a shame that play went to waste".

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## **I remember...**

...Albert Pujols hitting a HR off of Brad Lidge in the 2005 NLCS that hasn't landed yet.

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## **I remember...**

..Scott Posendnik, he of zero HR's in the regular season, hitting the game winning HR in Game 2 of the 2005 World Series. I remember my roommate, lifelong White Sox fan Chris, tackling me in celebration.

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## **I remember...**

..David Freese saving St. Louis in the 9th inning of Game 6 in 2011.

I remember Daniel Descalso and John Jay saving St. Louis in the 10th inning of Game 6 in 2011.

I remember Freese again in the 11th. The last twenty feet of his home run trot. The exuberant run-in-place. The batting helmet flipped between the legs. The mosh pit of euphoria. The tipping of the cap by Joe Buck to his father 20 years prior: "We will see you tomorrow night."





## **I remember...**

...Ortiz vs. Detroit in 2013.

...Bumgarner vs. Kansas City in 2014.

...David Murphy vs. the Record Book in 2015.

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I love October. I especially love October baseball. It bonded me with my dad. With my brothers. With my Chicago roommates. With random strangers on Waveland Ave. The magic in it is that I can reminisce about the success of the Yankees and Cardinals—teams I hate—with such awe. Because I love October for the wins *and* the losses. I love it for the heroes and the villains. And the goats. I love it for pulling off this drama without any true Cinderella's or a one and done format. Only in October could I be simultaneously jealous and blown away by a walk off home run.

But mostly I love it for the memories. I can't wait to make more. Bring on the 2017 season!

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## **Welcome to Sports Week**

In my experience it is rare for people who are passionate about literature like *The Lord of The Rings* and its films, and

who feel strongly about Star Wars and Marvel and DC, to also really get into sports. But this is one thing that makes Rambling Ever On unique. The eclectic tastes of its contributors are not merely tastes as much as passions and those that write for the site are as passionate about sports as much as anything.

And even within that broad topic, you will find very specific areas of expertise. The Lytle brothers are deep into the NFL and NBA. Mark Sass and Nathan Patton adore baseball and care strongly about two rival teams, the Cubs and Cardinals respectively. Nathan, Ben Plunkett and Josh Crowe all really get into the Olympics. Brandon Atwood and I (Gowdy) both hail from college football states where the love for the local teams is irrationally intense. Josh and Brandon even love soccer! How crazy is that?!? (I'm not sad to say, though, that we do not have any soccer articles).

So seeing as how we have from the outset of our relatively young site determined to write about what we know and love, sports have come up often. Even our guest contributors have helped add depth to our sports coverage. One particular day back in April we had articles with football, basketball, baseball and hockey all on our front page.

So this week, as the Olympics have wound down and as the baseball pennant races get a little hotter and as football makes its way back into dominating public consciousness, we at REO will highlight sports in our article production. Some of what we put out this week will be previously published material, but worth rereading or just reading if you missed it the first time. Some will be new. But it all will come from a place of knowledge and love of the games. So whether you are a pro fan or a college fan or just that type that loathes sports normally but gets into when nations are involved, sit back, relax and enjoy some strong opinions. And comment if you like, even if you disagree! We welcome vigorous yet healthy debate. Its one of the things we here at REO do best.

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# Thoughts From the Late Innings of Life

I thought of Tony Kubek and his teammates the other day, going back 56 years to 1960.

Tony Kubek is now 80 years old, and will be 81 in October. He was a professional baseball player, a shortstop with the New York Yankees in the 1950s and 1960s. He played nine seasons in the Major Leagues, and was Rookie of the Year in 1957.

I started following baseball as a kid. The Yankees were my favorite team, and Mickey Mantle was my favorite player. The Yankees were in their zenith during those years, appearing in the World Series from 1949 until 1964 every year but two, 1954 and 1959. They won several, they lost several, but they were always there. My wife said that as a girl she used to think that the National League played their season to see who would face the Yankees in the World Series.

Tony Kubek was tall (6 feet, three inches), athletic, and handsome. Today, no one but a true baseball aficionado or someone who lived in the 60s would remember him.

It's hard to believe the Yankees could have lost the 1960 Series. They outhit the Pittsburgh Pirates .338 to .256 for the seven games, and hit 10 home runs to four for the Pirates. The Yankees outscored the Pirates 55-27, and the three games they won were by scores of 16-3, 10-0, and 12-0. But the Pirates won four games, including the decisive seventh.

The crazy hop that felled Tony Kubek was a turning point in the series. I was 10 years old, and while I didn't see the seventh game—not many games were televised back then[1]. Upon

further reflection, the games were televised, but were always played in the daytime. (They didn't start night games until the 70s.) And they started the games in the afternoon around 1:00 or 1:30 when I was in school, so if I did see one it was the last few innings or on a weekend. I didn't see any of game 7.] -I have read numerous accounts.

In the middle of the 8th inning, the Yankees were up 7-4, and it looked like they were headed toward yet another world championship. The Pirates got a runner on first, and the next batter, Bill Virdon, hit a sharp ground ball to Kubek, a perfect double play ball. However, the ball hit a pebble or a pothole, and veered sharply off course, striking Kubek in the throat. Both runners were safe. Tony Kubek's throat filled with blood, and he began to have trouble breathing. He had to come out of the game. By the time the inning was over, the Pirates had scored five runs to take a 9-7 lead going into the 9th.

The Yankees scored two in the top of the 9th to tie the game, which set the stage for the most dramatic home run in World Series History. Bill Mazeroski hit a ball over the left field wall to win the game in the bottom of the 9th, 10-9, and the Pirates were World Series champions.

Kubek went on to play through the 1965 season, and then went into broadcasting. He became the best known color commentator of the time, and continued to do baseball until the 1990s when NBC lost broadcast rights to the game of the week. He broadcast Yankee games for a few years and then retired.

Now Kubek is 80, in the twilight of his life. Psalm 90 speaks of a human being's lifespan being "Seventy years are given to us! Some even live to eighty. But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we fly away." Life ends. If we say the youth phase is until age 20, then the young adult from 20-40, then middle age is up until 60, then after that, old age comes on. Very few people will

reach 100 or more. Though overall life expectancy is increasing, everyone eventually dies. Even if there is strength, there will be "pain and trouble," and at some point, we'll "disappear," and we will "fly away."

I am almost 66—my birthday is this month—so I have entered that "final phase." I want to be involved, productive, fruitful, for as long as I can. I realize I am no longer the teenager growing up in North Carolina, or the college student at Free Will Baptist Bible College (Welch College). Nor am I that missionary, active and serving in Panama, as I was for nearly 30 years. I have reached that final period of life, but I still enjoy living.

So what would I advise you and me?

First of all, regardless of your age, determine to finish well. Finishing with Christ and for Him is so important. No matter what your age, serve the Lord faithfully, and finish well. Many do not, and bring disgrace on the name of Christ and on themselves. By God's grace, we can finish strong. With Paul, let us strive to say "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

Be prepared for surprises. Life sometimes has cruel, unexpected surprises. When I played church softball in 1972, we never imagined that Terry Milner's broken leg, sliding into home, would lead to a blood clot that would take his life in just a couple of days. Our daughter-in-law Bethany's leaving the world at the age of 32, the victim of an aggressive, invasive breast cancer in 2015 still seems like a bad dream. Not everyone will have a predictable 80-year life span. Some will be called out way before what seems like their "right" time. That is in God's hand.

Remain active in doing what you can until the very end. While you will likely be unable to do at 60 what you could do at

thirty, you can always find something to do for Jesus. I am making adjustments because of health concerns and my overall age, but I can still serve the Lord.

Come to Christ, no matter how old you are. If you are reading this and aren't a Christ follower, please come to Christ. Mickey Mantle lived his life without the Savior, a womanizer and an alcoholic. In his 60s, he developed liver cancer and eventually had a transplant. Another teammate of his and Tony Kubek's, Bobby Richardson, the second baseman and Kubek's double play partner, had witnessed to him down through the years. While in the hospital, Mantle called Richardson, concerned about his soul. Bobby prayed with Mantle, then went to see him in the hospital. As he entered the room, Mickey greeted him with a big smile and said, "Bobby, I prayed to receive Christ," and quoted John 3:16. After talking with him for a few minutes, Bobby was convinced Mickey had trusted Christ. He would preach Mickey's funeral a few days later, giving a clear presentation of the plan of salvation. Mantle was 63, and died in 1995.

Remembering the 1960 World Series, Tony Kubek's decisive role in the outcome, and thinking back almost 56 years, is a vivid reminder of these valuable life lessons: knowing there will be some unexpected and unpleasant surprises, determining to finish life well by the grace of God, and being ready to meet the Savior at any time.

*"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide  
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me  
Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away  
Change and decay in all around I see  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me  
Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes  
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies*

*Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."*

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## **Baseball, Hockey, and a Lack of Grace**

I am a baseball fan.

That is not a surprise to anyone who knows me.

I am a Nashville Predators fan.

This is also no surprise to anyone who has heard that Jill (my wife) and I are sharing a season ticket this year, with Catie (my daughter) owning the other one.

Now here is the difference. I love baseball. I am a huge fan of the Kansas City Royals, but my entire life has been invested in reading about baseball, watching baseball, and listening to baseball, and it doesn't really matter who is playing. I read about the Gas House Gang, Roger Angell's Boys of Summer, and the great Roberto Clemente. I have visited over 30 major league parks, about half of that number in the minors, and have spent countless hours of throwing rubber balls off the garage door, giving my mom a perpetual summer headache. (Not to mention the ball games I played with Scott and Mark as we took on the neighborhood, playing in the street, or the full season whiffle ball league with Kevin and Rex.)

I have every major league team cap, with the exception of the Nationals in their move from Montreal to Washington; although I confess I have not kept up with all of the recent changes for each team.

By far my allegiance has been to the Royals, followed closely by the St. Louis Cardinals, especially the early 1970's version of Brock, Simmons, and Gibson. After receiving a 1973 Royals yearbook from my aunt and uncle, my now beloved Royals of Brett, White, and Patek became the Hosmer, Perez, and Davis World Series champions this year. But I have always loved the Brooks Robinson's, the Robin Yount's, and the Alan Trammel's of the other teams through the years. Even the hated New York Yankees of the 70's that took out my Royals three consecutive years did not discourage me from loving baseball.

This is not true for me in hockey. I love the Predators. I don't love hockey. I love the Predators, and hate very other team. Hate may not even be a strong enough word. [1. Yes, I looked up hate in a thesaurus and came up with other words.]

Part of the reason is that I fully appreciate the suicide squeeze, and the infield fly rule in baseball. I think I understand icing, and I can identify hooking, but a full grasp of the intricacies of hockey is not mine.

Another reason is that while hockey fans are in general some of the nicest people you will know; there are certain fan bases that seem a tad entitled. I don't even have to say the name, and some of you are already nodding that you too have seen Blackhawk fans up close, and have come away with a strong loathing.

Yet that is nothing compared to what I feel when I am watching on TV, or if I am watching in my beloved Bridgestone Arena.

I. Hate. The. Other. Team.

It doesn't matter which team. I may have lost my mind on this,



but fortunately not my testimony. [2. At least in the fact that my language has been good and that I have not questioned the ancestry of the other players. Not out loud. I cite Proverbs 26.5 here to back up my case.]

I actually called the director of NHL referees to let him know that his employees were struggling to apply the embellishment call equitably. Okay, I wasn't so eloquent. I was civil in tone. But I also published his office number on my Twitter account. Yep, I am that guy.

I don't apologize for it. In my mind, you cannot like any other NHL player. I am a fanatical fan of the Preds. There is never any call that is not against us. No other player can be trusted to be a good human being. If they are in an opposing sweater, they are the enemy. They deserve whatever is painful in their lives. Most of my vitriol is directed at Chicago...and Pittsburgh...and St. Louis...and Anaheim...and Winnipeg...and... See? It won't stop.

As we move onto the second round of the playoffs, my revulsion for Anaheim's Getzlaff, Perry, and that snot-nosed Perron has not subsided even after the gentleman's hand shake at the end of the series.

Perhaps this would be a good time for repentance, seeing that I am a minister and all. It would probably be a good time to talk about redemption, and the fact that those of us who are in the grace business should practice it all the time.

But when it comes to the Preds, if you aren't one of us, you aren't getting any. After the NHL All Star game here this season, I enjoyed watching Burns and Pavelski of the Sharks. But starting Friday?

Anathema.