**Baseball Is Life**

**The Atlanta Braves started a season long salute Thursday night honoring Hank Aaron on the 25th anniversary of his historic 715th home run that broke Babe Ruth’s record. The tribute has helped Aaron, who finished with 755 home runs, forget his somewhat bittersweet memories of the chase to beat Ruth. As he closed in on the record, Aaron received hundreds of thousands of parcels of mail, many filled with hate because there were people who did not like the idea that a black man from Mobile, Ala., was going to pass Ruth. Adding to the hurt was the fact that then-commissioner Bowie Kuhn was not even at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium on the night when Aaron broke the record. *(Denver Rocky Mountain News)***

**In the mid-'70s, 28 percent of Major League Baseball players were African-American. Today, only 8 percent are blacks of American origin. (About 30 percent of players are Latino.) Black players say that the game is now rarely played in America's inner cities. *(The Boston Globe, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 27, 2007)***

**On July 6, 1933, the most talented baseball players gathered at Chicago's Comiskey Park for the first All-Star Game. The American League won 4-2, with a home run by Babe Ruth. Nearly 50,000 fans cheered the ballplayers. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**One of the most wonderful architectural features of any baseball park is that no matter where you sit, you're within earshot of a comedian. *(Bill Vaughan, in Kansas City Star)***

**Our 4-year-old grandson, Matthew, had just returned from vacation Bible school, where he learned all about asking Jesus into his heart. When he came to visit our house, Matthew wanted to play baseball, as usual. And while running the bases, he veered over and excitedly asked me to put my ear against his chest. “That’s just your little heart beating from all the running,” I explained. “No,” he replied. “I think that’s Jesus in there.” (Dottie Brock, in Country Extra magazine)**

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**Baseball is 90 percent physical and the other half is mental. *(Yogi Berra)***

**Probably no one ever looked less like a fine **athlete** than short, squat Yogi Berra when he first showed up at Yankee Stadium in 1947. Bench jockeys around the league jeered at his face, his gait, and his malapropisms. His throwing was wild. Once, firing to second base, he hit his pitcher in the chest. Another time he beaned the second-base umpire, who was standing ten feet from the bag. But Yogi worked endlessly to overcome his shortcomings as a catcher, spent extra hours in the batting cage, studied rival hitters until he knew their every weakness. The result: Yogi played on 14 pennant-winning teams, hit 358 homers, was voted the league's Most Valuable Player three times, and set 18 World Series records. (Bits & Pieces)**

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**Egotistical Harry was always reminding people that he had played college baseball. "I was the James Bond type of player," he told friends. "I had all sorts of tricks to confuse the opposition." "Batted .007," his wife added. (Ashley Cooper, in Charleston, S.C., News and Courier)**

**Also remember this: Last April, San Francisco Giants outfielder Barry Bonds started with three hits in 29 at-bats, with one home run and one RBI. Mired in an 0-for-20 slump, Bonds was hitting .103 in the Giants first seven games. He ended the season with 73 home runs. (Sam Adams, in Rocky Mountain News, April 9, 2002)**

**In more than a century of baseball history, there have been 19 sets of three brothers who have played in the major leagues at the same time. The latest are catchers Bengie Molina and Jose Molina of the Los Angeles Angels and Yadier Molina of the St. Louis Cardinals. (The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 28, 2005)**

**No one ever played baseball harder than Kansas City Royals star George Brett. Once when a reporter asked the three-time batting champ and future Hall-of-Famer what he wanted to do in his last at-bat before retiring, he gave the following response: “I want to hit a routine grounder to second and run all out to first base, then get thrown out by a half step. I want to leave an example to the young guys that that’s how you play the game: all out.” *(Reader’s Digest)***

**Each baseball season, all the major-league teams buy two $45 buckets of mud from a farm in southern New Jersey. The mud contains a high level of feldspar, which is fine enough to remove the slippery factory gloss from balls without scratching the leather. *(Fortune, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 26, 2005)***

**Imagine having your life defined by the worst five seconds you ever experienced. Such was the fate of baseball player Bill Buckner, who died last week. Over 22 seasons, Buckner was a superb hitter, banging out 2,715 hits and winning a batting title. But in the sixth game of the 1986 World Series, when the 36-year-old Buckner -- hobbled by bum ankles and knees -- was playing first base for the Boston Red Sox, a weak ground ball off the bat of the New York Mets' Mookie Wilson dribbled through Buckner's legs, completing a stunning Mets comeback victory. The deflated Sox went on to lose Game 7. Frustrated Sox fans -- who hadn't won a Series in 68 years -- made Buckner the scapegoat for years afterward. So relentless were the taunting reminders of that muffed grounder that Buckner eventually moved from New England to Idaho to find some peace. His family, he said, "didn't like to see how people were treating me." I met Buckner a decade after the '86 Series, while reporting a newspaper story on Michael Jordan's attempt to play minor league baseball. Buckner by then had become a hitting instructor, and I found him studying Jordan's form in the batting cage before a game. When I introduced myself as a reporter from New York, Buckner stiffened. I briefly glimpsed old hurt in his eyes, which quickly became hard and challenging. He relaxed a bit when I asked him about Jordan's hitting, but he was glad to see me go. Fast forward another decade to 2008, so the day Buckner was invited back to Fenway Park for a celebration of the Sox's 2007 championship. When he walked to the mound to throw out the game's first pitch, the fans and players gave him a two-minute standing ovation. Buckner's eyes grew wet. "Glad I came," he said. They'd forgiven me; he'd forgiven them. May we all find such redemption someday, however small or large our sins might be. *(William Falk, in The Week magazine, June 14, 2019)***

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**A little boy asked his grandmother what year she was born. She replied “1924.” “Wow!” the boy exclaimed. “If you were a baseball card, you’d be worth lots of money!” *(Dr. Delia Sellers, in Abundant Living magazine)***

**A California collector last week paid $2.35 million for a single baseball card – a 1909 card featuring shortstop Honus Wagner. In mint condition, it has been called “the Holy Grail of baseball cards.” *(Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 16, 2007)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**Children talk about love: Love is the most important thing in the world, but baseball is pretty good, too. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**Robert Alston of Hamilton, Georgia explains that a pastor had a large group of children gathered around him for the children's sermon. "What is the object I have in my hand?" he asked. A hand shot up and little Cody exclaimed, "A baseball." "That's right," the pastor said. "And when you see a baseball, what do you think of?" Cody answered, "God." "You mean that this baseball reminds you of God?" the inquisitive pastor asked. "Why is that?" "Well, preacher," Cody replied, "I know you didn't get us up here to talk about baseball." *(Country magazine)***

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**When one of our school's jocks began goofing off in class, the teacher threatened him with detention after school if he didn't shape up. “But I have baseball practice!” the boy protested. “Listen, mister,” she replied, “you have a choice of which bat you're going to spend the afternoon with. Choose wisely!” *(Conci Pope, in Reader's Digest)***

**The church of baseball is open: "Baseball is back, thank God," said John Avlon. This week, the reassuring cry of "Play ball!" rang out in major-league stadiums across the country, providing proof that winter is over, spring has arrived, and "the church of baseball" has opened its doors. Many great writers and movies have explored and explained the magic of this child's game played by men: The blank slate that every new season presents; the game's slow, clock-free pace, with "meditation and strategy interspersed with furious action"; its deep connection to the past, with players competing not just with their rivals on the field but with the great ghosts of baseball history, whose statistics and legends happily haunt every ballpark. Bart Giamatti, the former Yale president who became baseball commissioner, once wrote that our national pastime is "designed to break your heart," because it begins in spring, when all things are possible,, "blossoms in the summer," then ends in the chill rains of October, "and leaves you to face the fall alone." But fall is now many months away, and "there are green outfields and long summer days ahead of us." Play ball. *(The Week magazine, April 12, 2013)***

**On February 25, 1924, Ty Cobb, one of the legends of baseball, issued an edict to his team, the Detroit Tigers, forbidding players to play golf during training camp. In fact, he went so far as to confiscate players' golf clubs. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**A major league small town: Cooperstown, New York, is rightly famed for its National Baseball Hall od Fame and Museum, says Denis Horgan in The Hartford Courant. Open year-around, it's a "major-league small-town national glory that both transcends and bins the generations." But Cooperstown and Otsego County are rich in much more than baseball lore. The landscape is extraordinary, the cultural life rich, and the opportunities for adventure limitless. It's best if you throw the map away and simply wander. A turn down Lake Street takes you past the grand old Otesaga Resort Hotel, a Federal-style mansion with 30-foot columns. Stop in for tea if you can't afford a night. Cooperstown's Main Street is packed with busy restaurants and shops. Bookending the town are the Farmers' Museum and the Fenimore Art Museum. At the former, visit the rambling fields, buildings, general store, blacksmith shop, and cooper's shop to get a taste of the farming life. At the latter, take in one of the nation's largest American folk art collections. The area is also home to the esteemed Glimmerglass Opera, as well as "Hall of Fame-worthy" nordic skiing and skating. Contact: Cooperstownchamber.org. *(The Week magazine, November 25, 2005)***

**Let the players go: Cuba has clinched a pact with Major League Baseball that will allow Cuban baseball players to join U.S. teams. In the past, star Cuban players have paid human traffickers to smuggle them off the island, and some pay a share of their MLB salaries to those criminal gangs throughout their careers. Under the agreement, Cuban players can be released from their Cuban Baseball Federation (FCB) contracts to sign with a U.S. team as long as the club pays the FCB a release fee. The deal has been in the works for three years, since the Obama administration ruled that the FCB was not part of the Cuban government and therefore could establish a relationship with a U.S. business. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), though, says that judgment was wrong. "It is a farce," he tweeted, "and I am working to get it overruled as soon as possible." *(The Week magazine, January 11, 2019)***

**Definition of baseball: Three minutes of action crammed into three hours. *(Terry Marchal, in Charleston, W.Va. Gazette)***

**Joe DiMaggio, the great New York Yankee outfielder, played baseball with deceptive ease. He made the hardest catch look routine, and when he was at bat, he hit with tremendous power but never appeared to be exerting himself. He made everything look effortless, although what he did could only be achieved with great effort. Once when asked why he played so hard, he said, “I always thought there was at least one person in the stands who had never seen me play, and I didn’t want to let him down.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Somebody once said that baseball is like driving is like baseball, the object is to get home safely. *(Reader's Digest)***

**Baseball is like church. Many attend, but few understand. *(Leo Durocher, baseball player and coach)***

**Early baseball was called the "New York Game." *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In 1909, a man named Charles Hercules Ebbets began secretly buying up adjacent parcels of land in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, including the site of a garbage dump called Pigtown because of the pigs that once ate their fill there and the stench that still filled the air. He hoped eventually to build a permanent home for the lackluster baseball team he had once worked for and now owned. The team was called the Trolley Dodgers, or just the Dodgers, after the way their devoted fans negotiated Brooklyn's busy streets. In 1912, construction began. By the time it was completed a year later, Pigtown had been transformed into Ebbets Field--baseball's newest shrine, where some of the game's greatest drama would take place. *(Geoffrey C. Ward & Ken Burns, in Baseball)***

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**Bad week for: Loud-mouthed jerks, after baseball umpire Bob Davidson ejected a fan for loudly heckling him with obscene taunts during a Giants-Phillies game in Philadelphia. "People cheered me," Davidson said, "which is unusual in this town." *(The Week magazine, August 19 / August 26, 2016)***

**On June 8, 1920, Cincinnati Reds outfielder Edd Roush was ejected from a baseball game for falling asleep in center field while playing the New York Giants. It all started when a hit down the third base line was called fair, but the Reds claimed it was foul. In fact, the entire Reds' bench cleared to argue against the call. As the arguing continued, center fielder Edd Roush lay down, using his glove for a pillow, and promptly fell asleep. Fifteen minutes later, the umpire called for play to resume and was infuriated to find Roush asleep. He was awoken and ejected. Roush threatened to sock the umpire for his ejection but refrained. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

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**What were the most errors ever committed in one major league baseball play? Three. A ball hit to right fielder Snead Jolley of the Chicago White Sox went through his legs and bounced off the wall back through his legs. He picked it up and threw it over the head of the third baseman. One run scored. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Baseball evolved in the early 17th century out of a family of English folk games including rounders, stoolball, and cricket. *Charlotte Lowe, in Fact-O-Pedia, p. 15)***

**Baseball: “A fellow has to have faith in God above and Rollie Fingers in the bullpen.” *(Alvin Dark, Athletics manager)***

**Carl and Abe are two old baseball fanatics. They agree that whoever dies first will try to come back and tell the other one if there's baseball in heaven. One evening Abe passes away in his sleep. A few nights later Carl hears what sounds like Abe's voice. “Abe, is that you?" he asks. “Of course it's me," Abe replies. “I can't believe it," Carl whispers. “So tell me, is there baseball in heaven?" “Well, I have good news and bad news,” Abe says. “The good news is, yes, there's baseball in heaven. The bad news is you're pitching tomorrow night." (David Dangler, in Reader's Digest)**

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**One of my favorite movies is Field of Dreams. I love the film because it encourages all of us to take plow in hand and till our own hopes and aspirations into fruition. In the movie, Kevin Costner plays a thirty-six-year-old college-educated Iowa farmer. While out in his cornfield, he begins hearing a voice: “If you build it, he will come.” At first, Costner’s character, Ray Kinsella, thinks he may be going crazy. But as he continues to listen, he begins examining his life more closely. He fears becoming old and ordinary before his time, as his father had after giving up a minor-league baseball career to raise a family and take an ordinary job. Costner’s character is guided to create a baseball field from his cornfield, believing that if he does so, his late father’s hero – Shoeless Joe Jackson – will return to play. The community thought Kinsella had indeed gone mad when he built a baseball diamond in the middle of nowhere. To make matters worse, his farm was on the verge of bankruptcy. Yet Ray Kinsella’s willingness to step out on faith and follow that voice transformed not only his own life but the lives of those around him. The long-dead Jackson did return, bringing with him other ball players. In the end Kinsella’s faith was rewarded, and he saved not only his farm but his dream as well. *(Mary Manin Morrissey, in Building Your Field of Dreams, p. 8)***

**Iowa's field of dreams: "More than 15 years after Ray Kinsella built it, people still come," says Linley Wattenberg in The Boston Globe. Every year, 65,000 tourists flock to Dyersville, Iowa, to see the ballpark that Kevin Costner's character built in a cornfield in the 1989 movie Field of Dreams. This year, it reopened two days before Major League Baseball started its season. Fans with gloves are welcome to play in the pickup games that go on all day, and equipment can be rented from the Left and Center Field shop behind the bleachers. "Long balls to the corn are ruled as ground-rule doubles, but no one keeps statistics." It's all about simply basking in the magic of the game. Every Sunday from June to September, the Ghost Players, a community team made up of some of the movie's ballplayers, show up to host an hour-long game, appearing out of the corn, just like in the film. "I've seen it a thousand times," says team manager Keith Rahe, "and still it sends a shiver down my back." Contact Dyersville.org. *(The Week magazine, April 22, 2005)***

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**You never ask why you were fired, because if you do, they’re liable to tell you. *(Jerry Coleman, baseball announcer)***

**At the age of 47 years and 240 days, Julio Franco of the New York Mets last week became the oldest Major League Baseball player to hit a home run. Franco credits his ability to play a decade beyond normal retirement age to a regimen of religion (he observes the Ten Commandments), exercise (he lifts weights six days a week), and especially diet. He eats up to 20 egg whites a day for protein, and drinks a blenderized concoction of cauliflower, celery, broccoli, beets, onions, garlic, and apples. “There is no magic pills,” he said. “The things I can control -- my diet, baseball, my interaction with friends, family, teammates -- that’s what I can control, and that’s what enriches my life. *(The Week magazine, May 5, 2006)***

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**The average nine-inning Major League Baseball game lasted a record 3 hours, 5 minutes, and 35 seconds this season despite efforts to make games shorter. In 2005, the average game lasted 2 hours and 46 minutes. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 18, 2019)***

**Baseball, it has been said, is a game of inches. But even more, it is a game of innocence. It is a child holding tightly to his father’s hand as he is taken to his first big-league ball game. Some 20 years later the scene is repeated – the child, now a man, has his own hand clasped just as tightly by his son as they approach the ballpark together for the first time. The father, as his father before him, knows full well that baseball is as much business as sport. He also knows that the world is not just and that life is not fair. But, given the slightest encouragement, mind and heart keep to their separate orbits. As father and son pass through the turnstiles, walk side by side through the damp passageways under the stadium, and then suddenly emerge into the dazzling brightness – the vast green playing field laid out like a magic carpet before them – they share the excitement that today is something very special for both of them. The parent passes on the wonder and awe of his own youth to his children, and in so doing renews it within himself. *(Anthony J. Connor, in Baseball: For the Love of It)***

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I grew up believing in values, and also believing we'll often fail short of realizing them. That training probably led me to baseball. The best hitters fail about 70 percent of the time. But that is no reason for them, or any of us, to give up. *(A. Bartlett Giamatti, former baseball commissioner)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*When Bob Gibson was enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame, Cincinnati Reds manager Pete Rose gave him the ultimate compliment. “Gibson,” said Rose, “has got to be the luckiest pitcher in baseball. He only pitches on the days when the other team doesn’t score any runs.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Which ballplayer was an MVP but never played in an All Star Game? Kirk Gibson was the National League MVP in 1988; although invited as an All-Star, he declined to play as a reserve. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Last year Tony Gwynn of the San Diego Padres won his third consecutive National League batting crown (his fourth over all) and his third Rawlings Gold Glove Award for outfield excellence. His success derives from more than talent alone. Gwynn and his wife have set up a “video central” room in their house where they record every televised baseball game. Before playing in a game against, say, Los Angeles, Gwynn will watch a tape of the various pitches and pick-off moves of Dodger pitchers. He’ll also study all the Dodger hitters so that he can position himself properly in right field. To Gwynn, each success provides him with a new starting point in his quest to be the best outfielder in baseball, the smartest base runner and the first player since Ted Williams to hit .400 in a season. This is what baseball – and life – are all about. *(Syd Thrift & Barry Shapiro)***

**Early this century, Philadelphia Athletics owner Connie Mack awarded pitcher Rube Waddell a contract stipulating that Waddell's battery mate, Ossie Shreck, could not eat crackers in bed when the pair shared a room on the road. In those days, baseball players had to share not only a hotel room when traveling, but the same bed as well! (Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia, p. 61)**

**Hit the ball over the fence and you can take your time going around the bases. *(John W. Raper)***

**It was Sunday morning and the church was filled. The muffled shouts of a group of boys playing baseball in the nearby school yard could be heard, as the mass began. Suddenly a baseball came crashing through the window, landing about four feet from the altar. A freckle-faced altar boy got up, genuflected, and walked over to the ball. He picked it up, hurled it back out the window. Then he solemnly tiptoed back to the altar and continued serving mass, just as if nothing had happened. (Greg Beck, in Reader’s Digest)**

**Two Brooklyn baseball clubs in 1861 played a four-inning midwinter game on ice skates. Once. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Football's instant replay can seem pretty slow sometimes, but it's not as slow as early baseball's witness interview. There was a time when umpires occasionally took testimony from players, managers and spectators before making a ruling. (L. M. Boyd)**

**One of the first western items the Japanese copied was a baseball. The game was introduced there in 1873 with an imported ball. Eventually, that ball wore out. They took apart the remains and made something similar - with a boot sole for the core and unraveled socks for the yarn. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The best lesson anyone can take from the life of basketball great Michael Jordan lies in a brief period when no one thought he was any good – during his attempt to play baseball. Those days of humiliation provide the answer to why the brilliant days are so often his. Just about every morning of that baseball summer, Jordan would urge his batting instructor to join him at the minor-league ballpark. Everyone knew Jordan wouldn’t make it to the majors, but he wasn’t about to concede. Instead, he worked and worked, hour after hour, trying to get better at something at which he had already been declared a failure. It was the best and truest Jordan. The great moments, when the world cheers, are not the moments that count. The ones that count are when it’s just you, and people have stopped believing in you. Those are the moments that define you. *(Bob Greene, in Chicago Tribune)***

**My father used to play with my brother and me in the yard. Mother would come out and say, “You’re tearing up the grass.” “We’re not raising grass,” Dad would reply. “We’re raising boys.” *(Harmon Killebrew, hall-of-fame baseball player)***

**Who's the only big-league baseball pitcher ever to win a Cy Young Award then never win another game? You must mean actor Richard Widmark's son-in-law Sandy Koufax. He's the only one so far. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Tommy Lasorda under the same roof? It happened Tuesday as a portrait of the Los Angeles Dodgers legend was unveiled at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery on Lasorda’s 82nd birthday. The unveiling was the latest honor for a one-time pitcher with an 0-4 major-league record, Lasorda was voted into baseball’s Hall of Fame in 1997 and had an asteroid named after him in 2003 – Asteroid Lasorda. He now serves as special advisor to the team. “Somebody out here asked me what’s next for you?” Lasorda said. “I said, ‘Heaven.’” (Chicago Tribune)**

**I was flattered when my son asked if I would bake a loaf of bread for him to share with his friends. Although the bread turned out a little flat and tough, he couldn’t wait to show it to his buddies. Out he ran with a big smile on his face. A bit later, I looked out of the window and saw my son standing with a catcher’s mitt in his hand behind the flat loaf. My bread was home plate. *(Lynne Leavitt, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Does it disturb anyone else that "The Los Angeles Angels" baseball team translates directly to "The The Angels Angels"? (Neil Degrasse Tyson, in Reader's Digest)**

**Baseball: The St. Louis Cardinals lost a July 2, 1933 doubleheader to the New York Giants, 1-0 in 18 innings in the first game and 1-0 in the nightcap. *(Norm Clarke, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**I’ve seen boys on my baseball team go into slumps and never come out of them, and I’ve seen others snap right out and come back better than ever. I guess more players lick themselves than are ever licked by an opposing team. The first thing any man has to know is how to handle himself. *(Connie Mack)***

**When Mickey Mantle graduated from Commerce High (Oklahoma) in 1949 he was not voted “Most Athletic." That's right, the man who possessed the greatest combination of power from both sides of the plate (he hit the longest home run in major league history, 565 feet in 1953) and speed (some experts suggested he could have won a track medal in the Olympics) lost out in the voting to his best friend, Bill Mosley. (Jim Kreuz, in Baseball Digest)**

**Baseball legend Willie Mays got only one hit in his first 26 at-bats in the major leagues. (L. M. Boyd)**

**As a student at Tampa, Florida's, Jefferson High, Fred McGriff didn't make the cut when he first tried out for baseball. This natural first baseman finally made the squad though -- and was drafted straight out of high school by the New York Yankees. Even with a $20 million four-year deal with the Atlanta Braves, McGriff is still considered humble to a fault. He once told Sports Illustrated he wanted to be remembered for “being consistent.” *(Lorrie Lynch, in USA Weekend)***

**Did you know that baseball is mentioned in the Bible? Remember when it said, “In the big inning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Anonymous)**

**Can you imagine a major league baseball player leading the league in making the most errors . . . in being struck out the most times . . . in hitting into the most double plays – and still being voted Most Valuable Player for that year? It happened. In 1942 Joe Gordon did all these things and still won the MVP award that season in the American League. What’s the business lesson in this? Joe Gordon’s case shows that even though you (or others) have faults, you can overcome them and be recognized for your good points. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**The Saint Paul Saints will be up and at 'em at dawn on Mother's Day. The Northern League team will host the Sioux Falls Canaries in an exhibition game May 8 at Midway Stadium. Game time is 5:30 a.m., the earliest start for a professional baseball game, according to the club. Fans attending the afternoon game May 7 will be allowed to stay overnight in the stadium parking lot and sleep on the field. The team said the early start will allow fans to spend more time with their mothers. *(Rocky Mountain News, April 15, 2005)***

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**Baseball: After seven consecutive losing seasons, including five with 101 or more defeats, the New York Mets won the World Series in 1969, the first year of divisional play. The Mets were 9 1/2 games behind on August 13th but won 38 of their next 49 games. They overtook the Chicago Cubs and claimed first place September 10th. The Mets swept Atlanta in three games to win the National League Championship Series and beat Baltimore in five games to win the Series. (Jack Etkin)**

**On February 19, 1942, the New York Yankees announced that they would admit 5,000 uniformed servicemen free of charge to each of their home ball games during the upcoming season. (The Daily Chronicle)**

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**My father was the new coach of a Little League baseball team and had not yet learned the names of my players. At our first game, I called each boy by the number on his uniform. When I yelled, “Number 5, your time to bat,” Jeff Smith came to the plate to hit. When I called for “Number 7,” Steve Heinz jumped up. Then I asked for “Number 1,” and no one emerged from the dugout. Again I called for Number 1. Still no one. As the umpire looked on, annoyed at this delay of the game, I shouted, “Who’s Number 1?” That’s when the whole team yelled, “We are, Coach! We are!” *(Kenneth L. Montgomery, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Reds' radio announcer Joe Nuxhall became the youngest player in major league history when he pitched in a game in 1944 at the age of 15. The lefty didn't pitch again in the majors until 1952. *(Reds Spring Training Program, 1993, p. 20)***

**Baseball is the only TV show I know where they cram 15 minutes of action into three hours. *(Donna L. Davis, in Reader's Digest)***

**When one of his players was thrown out at home, the high school baseball coach from Davidson County, North Carolina, went ballistic. He charged the ump, screaming and protesting the call until he was tossed from the game. Following the rule book, the ump ordered the coach to “go where I can’t see you.” That’s when the coach jumped onto home plate, saying, “I guess I’ll just stand right here, because you haven’t seen anything that happened here all night!” *(Kent Crim, in Carolina Country magazine)*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*
Satchel Paige, the oldest man in baseball and one of its most famous pitchers, didn’t break into the big leagues until 1949 when he was said to be 42 at least. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971. (*Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 69)***

**In 1965, at the age of 59, Satchel Paige pitched three scoreless innings for the Kansas City Athletics in a game against the Boston Red Sox. He gave up just one hit. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

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**Patience is a virtue in the world of baseball player development. Since the advent of baseball’s amateur draft back in 1965 there have been only 17 players go directly from the amateur level to the big leagues, and they have had minimal success. Six of the 17 didn’t even spend a full season in the big leagues. *(Tracy Ringolsby, in Rocky Mountain News, May 31, 1992)***

**The New York Yankees, with a 2010 player payroll of $207 million, contended this week for the American League championship against the Texas Rangers, whose player payroll was $55 million. The $152 million difference is the largest payroll disparity in the history of baseball postseason. *(GossipSports.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 29, 2010)***

**In a Perfect World pro baseball players would complain about teachers being paid contracts worth millions of dollars. *(John Gratton)***

**Baseball catcher Mike Piazza remembers the days of being batboy when the Dodgers came into Philadelphia to play the Phillies, dreaming one day of playing at Veterans Stadium. Now Piazza will be heading to Philadelphia, just outside his hometown of Phoenixville, not only as the starting catcher in the baseball All-Star Game, but the most popular player in the entire National League. *(Rick Hummel, in St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1996)***

**Why do you think a baseball pitcher takes so much time with the windup and the throw? The whole time he is fooling around on the mound he is visualizing the flight of the baseball. In his mind's eye he is seeing the ball wobble and dip and curve right where he wants it to curve. And when he has the image burned into the projection screen of his mind, he lets go the real thing--he throws the baseball. *(Michael Jamison)***

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**Remember that the umpire says at the beginning of each and every baseball game: “Play Ball," not “Work Ball." (David J. Seibert)**

**Of the 1,453 players who spent at least one day in Major League Baseball last season, almost 41 percent have made less than $1 million in career earnings. An average player needs to exceed three years of big-league service before netting $1 million in salary, and federal and local taxes and agent fees take about half of that total. The average player spends just 3.7 years in the majors. (FiveThirtyEight.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 26, 2020)**

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**Grandpa: “You know, boys, in my day I was quite the athlete. I was offered contracts to play pro basketball, baseball and football.” Lola: “The older he gets the better he used to be.” *(Steve Dickenson & Todd Clark, in Lola comic strip)***

**Where else do you get forty thousand people together rooting for someone they're pretty sure is going to lose? That's a real testament of faith. (Arnold Kanter, in Is God a Cubs Fan?)**

**Red Sox fever: Die-hard Red Sox fans value their team more than their health, a new study suggests. Researchers at Children's Hospital in Boston found that emergency room visits at six Boston hospitals slowed down during the Red Sox's historic 2004 post-season run. During especially crucial matchups, such as Game 7 of the league championship series and the final game of the World Series, emergency-room traffic fell by up to 20 percent, as fans stayed glued to their TV sets. "It's as if when they look at the TV, and see what's happening, they say, "My infected lung, it's not so bad." Dr. Alasdair Conn of Massachusetts General Hospital tells The Boston Globe. Researchers say that people apparently have a flexible idea of what constitutes an "emergency," especially if they're caught up in the excitement of a big game. "The heart attacks, the strokes, they will come in no matter what's going on," says Conn. "The patient with pneumonia, the patient with an asthma attack will say, "Maybe I can ride this out at home." (The Week magazine, October 14, 2005)**

**Good luck is what is left over after intelligence and effort have combined at their best. Luck is the residue of design. *(Branch Rickey, baseball great)***

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**Babe Ruth, besides holding the world lifetime record for home runs up to the 1970s, holds the world record for strikeouts as well. *(David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 143)***

**Babe Ruth wore a cabbage leaf under his cap to keep him cool. He changed it every two innings. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

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**Nolan Ryan admits it can become a load. Baseball's latest 300-game winner and all-time strikeout king almost struck out before he got started in the big leagues. He came close to quitting twice in the early days of his career. He was uncomfortable with the lifestyle and wanted to go back to work the ranch in Alvin, Texas. “It is such a grind, and you don't see the instant signs of success," said Ryan. “You get better in this game with experience. You don't just overpower the opponent with your size or strength. You have to learn to adjust so you can survive." (Tracy Ringolsby, in Rocky Mountain News)**

**“I've tried all the major religions, and most of the minor ones. I've worshiped Buddha, Allah, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, trees, mushrooms and Isadora Duncan . . . I've tried 'em all, I really have, and the only church that truly feeds the soul, day in, day out, is the Church of Baseball." (Opening narration by the character Annie Savoy (Susan Sarandon) in the movie Bull Durham)**

**Boy asks his Dad: “Dad, how come when Jesus gave His ‘Sermon on the Mound' He doesn't even mention baseball?" (The Lutheran Witness)**

**Susannah Shooter, who, at the age of 81, had been sewing baseballs for Spalding for 50 years, explained that she couldn't stand to watch a baseball game: "I hate to see all those balls batted into the stands after all that work." (Sports Illustrated)**

**Ringo Starr and Leonardo da Vinci, Charlemagne and Charlie Chaplin, Marilyn Monroe and Jack the Ripper -- left-handers all. Southpaws, sinistrals, port-siders, lefties. Editor H. L. Mencken traced the word southpaw to Chicago sportswriters in the late 19th century who used it while writing about the city's west-side ballpark. Pitchers faced west into the setting sun, so that their left arms were to the south. (The Kiwanis Magazine)**

**In 1979 Willie Stargell was being interviewed by a reporter. (If you don't remember Willie, he was the captain and first baseman of the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team. He was leading his team to the Pennant and the World Series.) The reporter asked him “Willie, how do you do it? You're 38 years old (over the hill for some ball players) and you're still leading your team to the World Series.” Willie replied: “We listen to the umpire.” Reporter: “What do you mean?" Willie: “After the Star Spangled Banner's played, what's the first thing the umpire says?" Reporter: “Play ball!" Willie: “That's right. We play ball. We don't work ball!" (Joe Sabah)**

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**No baseball pitcher would be worth a darn without a catcher who could handle the hot fastball. (Casey Stengel)**

**The secret of managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from the guys who are undecided. (Casey Stengel)**

**If you are fortunate enough to be in command of a successful organization, be grateful for the good people on your team. “In baseball, if a manager doesn’t have good players he can go home,” says Leo Durocher. “Look at Stengel. He finished last in Brooklyn. He finished last in Boston. Then he went with the Yankees and won 8 out of 10 pennants. And what did he say? ‘I couldn’t have done it without the players.’” (Bits & Pieces)**

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**On April 2, 1931, a 17-year-old minor league player, Jackie Mitchell, struck out Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig in an exhibition game. In the 2000s, both a TV show and a stage musical were based on this event. (The Daily Chronicle)**

**Jackie Mitchell pitched for a minor league club in an exhibition baseball game in 1931 -- and struck out both Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig. Jackie was a good pitcher, she was. (L. M. Boyd)**

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**Concerns about Sunday baseball were common to many homes. According to one account, a mother chided her boy Bobby for attending a game on the Lord's Day. "Think how grieved your father will be when I inform him of it," she said. "Oh, you needn't do that," Bobby said. "Oh, you told him, did you?" his mother asked. "No," replied Bobby, "he saw me there." (Edward Achorn, in The Summer of Beer and Whiskey, p. 117)**

**We are now approaching the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Pennsylvania legislature’s decision to lift a 140-year-old ban on Sunday sports. This finally happened in April 1933 with Sunday baseball games scheduled for 1934 in the Commonwealth. They cleared the way for all major league baseball teams to play some games on Sunday. The struggle for Sunday baseball coincided with an intense debate over the role of religion in public life, beginning in the 1870s and continuing well into the twentieth century. Religious libertarians, who wanted a minimum of government involvement with religion and who welcomed the growing religious pluralism, battled Sabbatarians, who wanted to declare Christianity the legally established and preferred religion and who supported various structures on activities deemed disrespectful to the Sabbath (the Sunday Sabbath, hat is). The Sabbatarians, who were mostly evangelicals, were distinctly unfriendly toward the increasing numbers of Catholic, Jewish and Eastern Orthodox immigrants, whom they saw as rivals to be subdued and marginalized. *(Albert J. Menendez)***

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**One out of four major league pitchers has had Tommy John surgery to replace the medial ulnar collateral ligament in the elbow. Last year, 116 pitchers suffered elbow injuries -- 68 percent more than in 2005. (The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 15, 2016)**

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**In a major league baseball game, an umpire can throw out any player or any manager. Who else? Any spectator. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A manager quarreled with the umpire on every call he made, until a foul was hit into the stands in the sixth inning. Immediately afterward a woman was carried out on a stretcher. The umpire asked the manager if the ball had hit the woman. “No," yelled the manager, “you called that one right, and she fainted." (Joe Garagiola, in Baseball Is a Funny Game)**

**Before 1859, baseball umpires sat behind home plate in rocking chairs. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 70)**

**St. Peter and Satan were arguing about baseball when Satan proposed a game to be played on neutral ground. “Very well,” said St. Peter. “But you realize I have all the good players and the best coaches.” “Yes,” replied Satan, “but I have all the umpires.” (Mildred Sherrer, in Reminisce magazine)**

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**Every baseball team could use a man who plays every position superbly and never makes an error. But so far, no one has been able to make him lay aside his hot dog and come down out of the grandstand. *(Inspiring Quotations: Contemporary & Classical, Compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)***

**Our church held a dinner and hymn-sing last fall during the World Series. Al, one of our parishioners, was eager to get home and watch the game on TV. When the meal was over and people began calling out hymn requests, he could contain himself no longer. “What number is ‘Take Me Out to the Ball Game’?” Al shouted. *(Jimmie L. Hancock, in Reader’s Digest)***

**The baseball pitcher who only hit one home run in 400 times at bat in a 20-year career; and that one on his first trip to the plate in a major league game, was knuckleballer Hoyt Wilhelm. (*L. M. Boyd)***

**You always have to learn how to lose before you can win. You don't accept losing, but you've got to learn how to forget it and go out the next day and win ballgames. That's one of the traits of this ballclub. *(Billy Williams, baseball Hall-of-Famer)***

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**After slumping a bit in September 1941, Ted Williams came to the season's final day, a double-header against Philadelphia. His average was at .39955, which would have rounded out to .400. Manager Joe Cronin gave Williams the option of sitting out both baseball games. Williams declined, and on a cold, awful day, he went 6-for-8 to finish with a historic .406 batting average. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**They throw you a round ball and give you a round bat and tell you to hit it squarely. *(Ted Williams)***

**In 1959, Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox was 40 years old, he suffered from a pinched nerve in his neck. The thing was so bad," he later explained, "that I could hardly turn my head to look at the pitcher." For the first time in his remarkable career, he batted under .300, hitting just .254 with ten home runs. Williams was the highest-salaried player in sports that year, making $125,000. The next year, the Red Sox offered him the same contract. "I told them I wouldn't sign it," Williams later reported, "until they gave me the full pay cut allowed -- 28 percent. My feeling was that I was always treated fairly by the Red Sox. Now they were offering me a contract I didn't deserve." The upshot was that Williams cut his own salary by $35,000! *(Will McDonough, in Quote Magazine)***

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It is possible to worship God while driving along the highway or sitting in a baseball park. But if we raise the question of statistical probability, the worship of God is scarcely as frequent in those places as in houses built in his honor. There is the story of the father who said, “Come on, we can sing hymns at the beach,” to which the little girl replied, “But we won’t, will we?” (*George Hedley, in The Superstitions of the Irreligious)***

**When Don Zimmer was San Diego Padre manager, he watched a rookie talking to his boyhood idol, Maury Wills. Commented Zimmer, “That’s what’s wrong with the world today. The rookie is asking Wills for advice but he’s doing 90% of the talking.” (Bits & Pieces)**

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