Randall Simon's Sausage Assault, Mascots, and the All-Star Game

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Randall Simon is a very lucky man. When he took his bat to the nearest sausage it was blind luck that it was not the Bratwurst that was within his strike zone along the railing of the Pirates dugout. Those of us who have called Wisconsin home at one point in our lives know that, although Italian sausage may be savored by many, it is only the Brat that has sacred iconic status in the home state of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy. There are many other places that claim to hold a Bratwurst Festival but the annual event in Sheboygan is the only one that requires a pilgrimage of the faithful.

So had Simon whacked the Brat he would have been facing more than a small fine and a round of public ridicule. The good people of Wisconsin would have demanded much more. The state prosecutor would have thrown the book at him complete with sauerkraut, mustard, and a mug of Milwaukee's finest.

 Isn't it amazing how every year the wizards haunting Major League Baseball find some way to humiliate the national pastime? The former Acting Commissioner for Life, Bud Selig, weighed in on Sausagegate with an appropriately supercilious comment: "We are reviewing the situation pending the disposition of the criminal charges. Obviously, the type of behavior exhibited by Mr. Simon is anathema to the family entertainment that we are trying to provide in our ballparks and is wholly unacceptable." H'rumph! H'rumph!

Rick Schlesinger, Brewer's executive vice-president, called this "an insane act of a person whose conduct is unjustifiable. It sickened me to see it. I can't put into words the anger I feel and the sense of outrage I have." Good to see that someone in the Brewers organization could put things into perspective. Simon was whisked off to jail in the back seat of police cruiser as soon as the game ended. He was hiding under a blanket.

The only person who seemed to have any perspective at all on this event was Mandy Block, the young woman who was wearing the Italian sausage costume on that fatal Milwaukee night. "It's such a silly little thing, you know. . . From my point of view, it's crazy because I am not used to like
being interviewed or anything. I'm like, 'I'm just a sausage, guys. It's not a big deal. I'm fine.'"

One final note. Next Thursday and Friday the Celebrity Mascot Games will take place in Orlando with some 32 mascots in competition. If they announce that one of those two nights is "Randall Simon Night," I'll be there with my trusted Louisville Slugger, Sammy Sosa model 1087, corked.

If this isn't enough silliness for the Lords of Baseball the folks at the Major League Baseball offices continue to use a system for all-star selection guaranteed to leave some of the best players at home and embarrass the national pastime. By limiting the roster and requiring one player from each team, it is a certainty that some very good players will always be left out.

Let me make a suggestion to solve this problem. Have the players and managers select the All-Star team, and in a separate process let the fans vote one player from each team to the All-Star squad. If that one player replicates a choice by players and managers, fine. If not add that player to the appropriate squad. What this will guarantee is a squad on which each team has a representative and a squad of excellent players, while continuing to allow the fans to take part in the process. If this still produces oversights and slights then let the Commish exercise his wisdom.

This year with the game in Chicago the major star players of both the White Sox and the Cubs, Frank Thomas and Sammy Sosa, will not be on the All-Star teams. This is sure to please Sox and Cub fans everywhere. Also absent from the squad is the most exciting young player of the season, Dontrelle Willis, pitcher from the Marlins, whose miniscule E.R.A. and 8-1 record make him All Star material, and Roger Clemens, for whom this is his final season and whose career makes him All-Star material. Certainly there is every reason to keep these players out of the ballpark next Tuesday, lest someone get the idea that this is a game for the fans and a game to showcase Major League Baseball.

Then we have the decision by Bud Selig to make the All-Star Game count for something. I always thought it counted for the excellence of the game.
Having been complicit in the tie game of a year ago, Bud has moved to fix the problem by having the All-Star game determine home field advantage for the World Series. Bud has thus created a non-solution to a non-problem: A great idea when you have already guaranteed that all the best players will not be on the teams.

What was so bad about a tie in the All-Star Game anyway? And did anyone ever feel cheated by the performances of Babe Ruth, Ted Williams, or any of the other greats of the game at an All-Star game.

And has this solved such an alleged problem? What happens if in the seventh inning with the score tied one of those wonderful summer downpours hits the ballpark in Chicago? What then? Will game seven of the World Series be played on a neutral field? Say somewhere like Miller Park?

The Federal Government ought to require a large sign be posted in front of the offices of Major League Baseball reading, "Danger, Baseball Geniuses at Work."

One can only wonder what awaits us in the days ahead; perhaps more theories on heat endurance.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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