

10-8-2004

## Trouble in Cubdom

Richard C. Crepeau

University of Central Florida, [richard.crepeau@ucf.edu](mailto:richard.crepeau@ucf.edu)

 Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), [Journalism Studies Commons](#), [Other History Commons](#), [Sports Management Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)  
Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety>  
University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Commentary is brought to you for free and open access by the Public History at STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in On Sport and Society by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "Trouble in Cubdom" (2004). *On Sport and Society*. 666.  
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/666>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
Trouble in Cubdom  
OCTOBER 08, 2004

There was a time when being a Cub fan was one of the easiest callings in the world. You would begin in spring training reciting all those spring training mantras like "We're all in first place on April 1st," or "This isn't the same team that finished at the bottom last year," or in the more unfortunate words of Leo Durocher, "This isn't an eighth place team." Leo unfortunately had a lapse of memory as the National League had expanded to ten teams. But I digress.

The point is that you could recite the mantras and feign optimism, while always knowing that by the end of April it would be over. The Cubs would have clearly revealed themselves and taken over sole possession of last place. For Cub fans reality always set in early. This was liberating, as it allowed them to relax and enjoy the baseball season without the tensions of a pennant race or without worrying about the consequences of another critical loss.

This is one of the reasons why Wrigley Field was such a great place to go and watch a baseball game. You could enjoy the ambiance, the characters inhabiting the stands, and the intimate beauty of the place. And it was all done in daylight. No lights. No darkness to magnify the gloom of losing. And because it didn't matter if the Cubs won or lost you still went home happy. On the odd occasion when they did happen to win it was a bonus adding marginally to the happiness of being at a baseball game in such a place as Wrigley Field.

Somewhere along the line Cubdom took a wrong turn. Perhaps it began when the Cubs stopped folding their tents in April. Perhaps flirting with greatness in the late Sixties and then again in the Eighties was the beginning a process that led to the recent bitterness in Wrigleyville. Perhaps it was adding lights that made the old ball yard less charming and losing more painful. Perhaps, too many Cub fans forgot their heritage or never knew their history. Has anyone ever heard Todd Walker or Moises Alou say "Let's Play Three?"

In the last two years the Cubs have run afoul of their own delusions. After the marvelous Bartman incident had reaffirmed their heritage, Cub fans refused to recognize Steve Bartman's

fateful role as "historic necessity." Many actually believed that the Cubs should have won the NLCS and the World Series. Illusions and more Illusions, they can only lead to bitterness and misery.

Operating under this dark cloud Cub fans entered the just concluded baseball season certain that victory would be theirs, that with the best pitching rotation in baseball and a lineup of impressive hitters, it was all but a forgone conclusion. This year would be different and the Cubs would walk off with the National League pennant and go on to win their first World Series since Teddy Roosevelt was president.

What happened when reality set in was just all too predictable. The key figures in the best pitching rotation in baseball suffered from injuries and couldn't win ten games each. The Cubs biggest home run threat and spiritual leader missed a month of the season and reverted to his habit of chasing the low outside pitch. Before you could say "Billy Williams" the Cubs were looking up in the standings at the St. Louis Cardinals across an insurmountable gap.

But not to fear the Wild Card would be theirs.

Unable to open a lead in that phase of the race, the Cubs set themselves up for disaster during the final ten days of the season. In spectacular fashion they lost leads in the late innings, two coming within an out of victory, two in extra innings, and several by one run. It was a collapse of epic proportions, and indeed it will enter the annals of Cublore somewhere between Bartman and the Black Cat.

Most disconcerting of all has been the un-Cub like conduct of the players. Starting in late July the complaining began. The umpires were out to get them, injuries were killing them, the sportswriters gave them no respect, the television announcers, Steve Stone and Chip Carey, were too critical. How could they possibly win under these conditions? Todd Walker wondered aloud why Stone and Carey were allowed on the Cub plane. You could feel Todd's pain as he affirmed he was no Ryne Sandberg.

The loveable losers were losing their cuddly qualities.

When the end came the front office called Steve Stone on the carpet following his analysis of failure in a radio interview as the ship was sinking. On the final day of the season Sammy Sosa arrived late and left early without consulting management. The

result was a fine constituting a loss of a day's pay, some \$87,400. Sammy says he will file a grievance over the fine. Astounding thought that a true Cub would file a grievance.

Cubdom was in chaos.

Poor Dusty Baker the architect of dissolution didn't understand the Cub heritage and convinced his players that they were not the Cubs but rather a team that could win the World Series. How sad for Dusty who drank too much from the winning ways in San Francisco, and had forgotten where he was. Baker never knew how to lose gracefully, with a smile, and a call to play three.

As Leo would have said, it's time to back up the truck. Get some real Cubs back at Wrigley and take down the lights. Appoint a committee of coaches to rotate as manager. Fun at the old ballpark can be brought back, but not while Cub fans think that winning is within their grasp. It's not. These are the Cubs. The lovable losers. The non-Yankees.

"Recapture the legacy" would be a nice slogan for next year. In fact there is no need to wait until next year. Read your Cub History. There are lessons to be learned.

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.

Copyright © 2004 by Richard C. Crepeau