

Swingin' in the rain

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
Swingin' in the rain
OCTOBER 29, 2008

Everybody talks about the weather but no one ever does anything about it.

You don't have to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.

And you don't have to be Bill Ayers to make better decisions about the World Series than Bud Selig.

In baseball you win some, you lose some, and some get rained out. In Game Five at this year's World Series none of these alternatives applied. This is why Bud Selig will be forever known as the Great Innovator. It will also rival the All-Star Game fiasco which he presided over and then compounded with his great innovation to have that game determine home-field for the World Series.

Before getting to Game Five, just a word about Game Three. Why was it played? For nearly two hours fans sat in the cold and wind and rain to see if the game would be played. There was no reason to put them through that ordeal. If you were at home at least you were dry, but the delay was just as irritating. Then when the game started the wind was blowing, the temperatures were dropping, and as it turned out the game went on to its 5-4 finish at 1:47 a.m. How great was that?

If there were any concerns at all for the fans in the stands, Game Three would have been postponed. If there was any concern about wanting to have a television audience east of the Mississippi, then this game would have been postponed. In all of his wisdom, and always concerned about the fans, Bud Selig, the former Acting-Commissioner for Life, let the game go forward. We are told FOX television is the culprit here. If the ratings are bad to begin with why would FOX want to put this game on at this late hour? Ask Bud; apparently he knows.

This was just the opening act. The feature presentation, so far, came in Game Five. The first problem in looking at Game Five is trying to figure out what really happened. Bud Selig has his story, but how much of it reflects reality remains a mystery.

What does Bud say? The Commissioner says that the weather forecast he was using indicated that there would be light rain, .10 inches during the evening, which might have produced a slight delay in the game. The Commissioner says that he had made a decision that this game would be played to its completion regardless of circumstances. The Commissioner says that league officials, team officials, and the managers were informed of this and agreed to it. Given the weather forecast then, everyone was on board to start the game, and the feeling was it could be played to its conclusion.

We also know that this decision to override the rules of baseball taken by Bud Selig is an exercise of extraordinary powers. We know that Bud did not inform the television or any of the press of this decision. We know that the fans were not aware of this decision, a decision which of course meant that this game was being played under new rules installed by the Commissioner. We do not know if the players knew that they were playing the game under new rules, and if they did not, why didn't they?

First, the weather report. Bill Conlin wrote the following day that at 6:30 p.m. the AccuWeather Blog from a Philadelphia TV station was predicting the deluge along with the nasty wind. The report carried the headline "Cancel the Game Tonight." Doppler Radar was also indicating by the fourth inning that the game was sitting at the edge of the coming rain. From here things deteriorated quickly.

So let's give the Commish the benefit of the doubt and accept the notion that he had an optimistic weather report that justified starting the game. And let's accept the notion that he had made the decision that the game would only be suspended not cancelled regardless of the score. The question then is why did the game go on until the middle of the sixth inning?

By the bottom of the fourth inning Evan Longoria was standing in the middle of a small pond at third, leading Rays fans to wonder if he could swim. Standing water on the infield should have ended the game. Then in the top of the fifth inning Jimmy Rollins looked like someone trying to catch a ball falling from the Empire State building during a hurricane. Rollins circled and stumbled and watched helplessly as the ball landed in his general vicinity.

Surely that's it. Call the game. Weather conditions have altered the game significantly. It was already unplayable. But no, the

game went on to the top of the fifth and through the bottom of the fifth. Stop the damn game. This is nonsense. Someone could get hurt or catch pneumonia and the game is now a circus act and not a baseball game. But no, in the spirit of Avery Brundage, the game must go on.

Where was Bud? He was concerned, he tells us. He was poolside with the groundskeeper, apparently paralyzed.

Then in the swamp of the sixth inning the Rays tied the game, as B.J. Upton survived a water-boarding trip around the bases and hydroplaned his way across home plate while over the P.A. system Gene Kelly was singing. Once the wake from Upton's slide reached Bud the game was called.

The TV people explained that when the Rays scored it took Bud off the hook and the World Series would not go to the Phillies in a rain shortened decision. Little did they know that this was not the case, because The Great Innovator had already changed the rules.

This means of course the failure to call the game earlier has only one explanation. The Commissioner of Baseball doesn't know enough to come in out of the rain.

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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