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World Series recap

Richard C. Crepeau
University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
World Series recap
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Now that the rain that lasted for forty hours and forty minutes has ended, a World Series winner has been determined, and Commissioner Selig has disembarked from his Ark, I want to say a few things about the series itself, as well as take a look at some of the "solutions" to the problems raised by the circumstances of Game Five.

This was in fact an interesting and exciting World Series and the winning team was clearly the better team. Three of the Philadelphia wins were by one run, the one Rays win was by two runs, and there was only one blowout. The Phillies had more power hitters and better pitching in the bullpen. Although the Rays starting pitching was deeper than the Phils on paper, in this series the Phils starters more than held their own, while Cole Hamels dominated.

Those who stayed away from their television sets in record numbers missed some great pitching, a brief power display by the Phillies, and some excellent fielding when the weather permitted. For the Phillies this was a great win for a franchise that has had only one World Series win in its existence, and in fact very few other Series appearances. They were no match for the Cubs in futility, but they were perilously close.

For the Rays it was a great World Series just by the fact that they participated. Ten years of total futility suddenly disappeared, and the people of St. Petersburg and Tampa Bay discovered that there was a very good young team hidden in the witness protection program at "The Can." The future should be bright for this team, although there are questions about the health of the franchise. The big questions will be answered by season ticket sales in the off-season and overall attendance next season.

As to the "solutions" to the problems raised by the weather, some have suggested a neutral site for the World Series, either in a dome or in a warm weather site. Neither of these will be, or should be, considered. A dome is no place to play the most important baseball games of the season. Warm weather neutral sites do get rain, although those in the desert might raise the probability of a rain free event. Most importantly the World Series can not be taken away from the fans who support their

team over the 162 game season. Baseball is not pro football. Ordinary fans still matter in baseball and at the World Series, and unlike the NFL, Major League Baseball is not totally devoted to the rich and famous.

There are other alternatives that could be considered to mute the weather factor. One possibility is to shorten the season so that the World Series would end before mid-October. This would minimize the cold weather factor. Second, games could begin at 6 p.m. Eastern time and not go into the late night hours with dropping temperatures. Day games could return on weekends. Baseball is already losing the ratings game to football, so why not go to a better time of day to play these games? Maybe the fans would find that an attractive prospect, causing the TV audience to return.

As to the particular issues raised in Game Five, the solutions seem easier to find. There should be a rule that all games that are started will be played to their conclusion, regardless of the number or duration of delays in play. This would apply regardless of inning or score at the time of suspension. It would make the decision to suspend a game easier, and it would prevent anyone from winning a championship as a result of a truncated game. These should be permanent rule changes not some ad hoc decision made by the Commissioner, who then keeps that information from players and fans. All these changes should apply for all the playoff rounds and not just the World Series.

So with these final thoughts on the World Series and knowing the Cubs will be seeking to extend their record for baseball futility, I can only say with all those many fans of teams other than the Championship Phillies, "Wait Till Next Year."

This column will be on hold for several weeks as I am off on an overseas trip to discover if I can see Sarah Palin's front porch from Russia. I promise to report back on that and other matters sometime in December.

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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