

## Winners and Losers

# More Baseball, Less Politics

*An epic World Series and a contentious presidential election offer stark contrasts*



BOB LATHAM

One of the signature stand-up routines of the late comedian George Carlin involved comparing the violent nature of football with the more pastoral nature of baseball. Among his observations: "Football has hitting, clipping, spearing, blocking, piling on, late-hitting, unnecessary roughness and personal fouls. Baseball has the sacrifice." On November 2, the

Chicago Cubs won the World Series for the first time in 108 years. On November 8, Donald Trump won the United States presidency—the first time that a candidate with no experience in either public office or the military has done so. The contrast in the reaction of the nation to these events, and to the process leading up to them, was striking. So, in the spirit of Carlin, let me compare baseball and American politics.

Because of their long World Series droughts and ardent fan bases, the Cubs and the Cleveland Indians (who have now been without a title for 68 years) represented two of the more popular and sympathetic teams ever to compete in the World Series. The presidential political process produced two of the most unpopular candidates ever to face off in the general election.

The respect between the Cubs and Indians players was palpable on the field and off—the acrimony between the two political candidates and two political camps was equally palpable. In a similar vein, during the World Series, I was on a plane to Chicago in which about 85 percent of the people were wearing Cubs' blue, with a sprinkling of Indians fans wearing red (albeit balanced with navy). Each group treated the other good-naturedly and with respect, neither thinking that the rival supporters were "deplorable" or "losers."

In all seven games of the World Series, the team with the most runs won. In two of the last five presidential elections, the candidate with the most votes lost. To be clear, I'm not against the Electoral College, but it does lead to a result that is less pure and not as universally accepted as a World Series victory.

On the subject of acceptance, the use of video replay in the World Series not only prevented any suggestions

that the process was "rigged" but also prevented any repeats of the 1985 World Series in which the defining moment was an umpire's blown call. Our processes in baseball evolve; our political processes devolve.

The Cubs' victory parade in Chicago drew 5 million fans, the seventh-largest gathering in human history. It dwarfed the political rallies of Hillary Clinton, the "huuuuge" rallies of Donald Trump, and even the victory gathering of President Obama in the same Grant Park in Chicago in 2008.

The managers of each baseball team actually answered the questions asked at press conferences, unlike the candidates at the presidential debates. Furthermore, the baseball managers inspired harmonious locker rooms. The same cannot be said of the two campaigns.

## THE MANAGERS OF EACH BASEBALL TEAM ACTUALLY ANSWERED THE QUESTIONS ASKED AT PRESS CONFERENCES.

Speaking of locker rooms, the "locker-room talk" that was exposed during the presidential campaign was not something you would hear in the locker rooms of these baseball teams. Come to think of it, there may have been more of Carlin's "dirty words" used in this year's political discourse than were caught by live microphones during the World Series.

Sitting in the audience at the debates were alleged Bill Clinton paramours on one side and Trump arch rival (and Twitter sharpshooter) Mark Cuban on the other side. Sitting in the stands at Wrigley Field was the dignified and apolitical former Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, a lifelong Cubs fan, resplendent in a Cubs jacket and bow tie.

Finally—and I admit that I am a biased Cubs fan—I would not mind seeing a World Series between these two teams again next year, and each team is built for that to happen. Anyone care to relive this political season? ■

Bob Latham is a partner at the law firm [Jackson Walker, L.L.P.](#), and a World Rugby board member. A compilation of his best columns titled "Winners & Losers: Rants, Riffs and Reflections on the World of Sports," is available in the Media Zone at [SportsTravelMagazine.com](#).

