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Life, Religion and Sex Equal Baseball?

Baseball was once the most popular sport in America. In fact, it was known as the national pastime. Every kid grew up playing it and watching it. It was a key aspect of every American's life. While that is no longer the case, the impact of the game is certainly still felt across the country. There are still people that never miss a game and always have their lucky hat or jersey no matter where they are watching from. Baseball is still very present in metaphor, in both the use of other things to describe baseball and the use of baseball to describe other parts of life. These metaphors can be used to show or inflate the value of baseball, show the impact baseball has on the lives of its followers and can even show how baseball has spread into other parts of American culture.

One of the most impactful metaphors for baseball is that baseball is like life. Not in the sense that it is important to someone or anything like that, but in the sense that baseball can almost in a way represent life. In an article on The Jambar the link is broken down clearly. The first link is, "Baseball, like life, has no established time for its ending. Sure, both things will eventually end, but they do so at a time unbeknownst to anyone ahead of time." There is one perfect link, neither has a defined ending. Second, "In baseball, just as in life, many decisions are before us, and over time, both good and bad will happen." Another perfect link, good and bad will always happen in both and some will be out of a person's control. Third, "The great thing about life and baseball, though, is that we get a chance to redeem our mistakes — whether it's by baking a batch of delicious double chocolate chip cookies or by swatting a walk-off solo home run to lead your team to victory." No matter what happens in both baseball and life, every person gets a chance to make up for their mistakes. And finally, a quote to wrap it all up, "That's the

great thing about life. Just as in baseball, the lack of time constraints allows for the possibility of anything to happen.” This is the key link between the two, anything could happen at any point and a person can’t always prepare for or expect what is going to happen next.

The use of this metaphor serves a purpose, to show the value of the game. In a time where many are speculating that baseball is dying, this metaphor is a way to add more importance to the game. If people see the values of the game and the life lessons that it can teach people may be more likely to introduce their kids to baseball and support them in playing and being a fan. If this happens, baseball can gain more fans and possibly become as popular as it once was.

This also shows how important baseball is. Comparing baseball to life also in a way shows how baseball is in all of our lives. Whether a person follows baseball or not they have some kind of link to it in some way or another.

There is another article written by Simon Wilson of the BBC that also looks into baseball as a metaphor for life and also shows how it can be realized by all people. Wilson brings in an outsider perspective, as he is from the United Kingdom, yet even he recognizes the connection. Early on in the article he states, “As a sport, it is really all about failure. Or more precisely how the players psychologically handle failure - the fact that they are going to miss the ball more often than they hit it.” He goes on to discuss how getting a hit a third of the time in baseball is considered good and how absurd it would be to think of star athletes like soccer player David Beckham or tennis player Andy Murray only being successful a third of the time. Wilson discusses the struggles of the American economy at the time and then says, “But, just as their baseball players do, Americans are adept at picking themselves up when the market fails.” Here, he recognizes the ability to pick yourself up and move on after failure is one learned from

baseball. It is represented here that baseball, just like life is all about failure and how you move on and grow from it, and that is where the true connection between baseball and life lies.

Through this lens baseball can also be seen as a metaphor for the American Dream. There is struggle and no guarantee for anything, but everyone gets a fair chance. People struggle and get knocked down, but if they can fight through their failure, they have the chance to succeed. This connection is one that likely reveals why baseball was the most popular sport in America for most of the 20th century, people felt it represented them. This is something that Wilson recognizes and acknowledges through his linking of the American life and baseball, while not explicitly saying it.

I think this is something that many people can relate to. Everyone has been knocked down and forced to push through difficult times in order to succeed. By looking at it in this manner, again people can see and understand how baseball is so key to the American culture and how even those who don't like baseball can relate to it and see parts of their own lives in it.

While there are key metaphors that use baseball as the metaphor like those ones, there are also metaphors used to describe baseball. These metaphors are the ones that really show how people talk about baseball and relate to baseball language, sometimes without even noticing it. One of them that is very impactful is the metaphor that baseball is a religion. This metaphor is used in an article written by Jim Morissette, a writer for Bleacher Report. In the article it is stated, "At one point in American history, baseball was equal to religion. From factories to steel mills, churches and schools, to small towns, large cities coast to coast, and on US military bases all over the world, there was rarely a place in our beautiful nation where baseball was not played or discussed." To start with a lot of people say there are baseball gods. These gods are not named and people may not truly believe in them but they act as if they do, saying the baseball gods do

not like a player or a certain things, it really is just more like a consensus of fans don't like those things but people say it is the baseball gods. Secondly there are the rituals, and I think this is where baseball and religion really begin to look alike. Every religion has its own rituals, praying at certain times, or eating certain meals, or dressing in certain ways. Baseball fans have rituals very similar to this, always dressing a certain way when they go to a game or watch a game, always eating a hot dog when they go to the ballpark, or always doing the same cheer when a player is up. In both of these cases the participant believes that performing this ritual will have some kind of positive effect. In the case of religion, it's a positive effect on their life or their afterlife and in baseball it is a good outcome in the game.

Baseball metaphors also surround us with phrases such as "batting a thousand", "rain check", "touch base" and many more. These are phrases that I think everyone has heard before and ones that many people might not realize come from baseball. These phrases, among others derived from baseball, have become common in our culture. The fact that these phrases have become so common speaks to how deeply rooted baseball is in the life of Americans. Even those who do not know much about baseball have likely used these phrases that came from it. This may also be another way that baseball is like religion, even people who do not really follow it still know things about it and use some of its language. For example, even people who are not religious at all may know of and may make reference to things like the last supper or Moses parting the Red Sea. Similarly, there are people who do not follow baseball who may use phrases such as "drop the ball" and "playing hardball".

Although it seems to me that baseball metaphors are everywhere, I can acknowledge that many may not recognize them or even think of some of them as baseball metaphors. Being a person who loves baseball, it is easy for me to see all of the ways in which baseball appears in

everyday conversation, but for someone who knows little to nothing about baseball these metaphors may not be clear or even recognizable as coming from baseball. This could be a problem with some baseball metaphors because if it isn't clearly recognizable as coming from baseball then does it truly count as a baseball metaphor? For example, "rain check" came from the tickets that would be given out allowing a fan to return to another game if the game they originally were to attend was cancelled due to rain. But if a person is not familiar with this history, they could just think of a rain check as being associated with any sporting event or even a concert or some other event. Or they could even think of it as in someone saying, "I'll take a rain check" when they are asked if they want to go out for dinner. There are a number of ways that a person could know of and understand the term "rain check" and therefore I am not sure if it counts as a baseball metaphor. It is very clearly rooted in baseball, but plenty of people do not know that history and do not know its origins come from baseball. So, I'm not sure if this metaphor and other metaphors that people may associate with things other than baseball still count as "baseball metaphors".

One set of metaphors that I am certain are baseball metaphors are the ones used to describe sex. There are the "bases", going from first base to a homerun with the level of physical intimacy increasing as it gets closer to home or a homerun. This starts with making out as first base and ends with sex being a homerun. These bases are even being updated now, as an article from Cosmopolitan broke down how the meaning of each base has changed from 1935 to present time. The more current bases according to Cosmopolitan begin with things like sexting at first base and a homerun being things such as anal, threesomes and as said in the article, "the freakiest stuff you've ever done." This means that although the "bases" have been around for a long time people are still thinking about and updating them today. To go along with the bases there is also

“striking out” which is failing to engage in any kind of sexual activities. There is also the term “switch hitter” or “playing for both teams” which may be used for a person that is bisexual or the phrase “playing for the other team” which is used in reference to a person that is gay or lesbian. These metaphors which are used by people ranging from teenagers to boomers and people who enjoy baseball or who know nothing about it demonstrate how baseball has spread throughout our country. Plenty of people do not like baseball but many people like sex and baseball has been engrained so much in our culture that though people may not love it the way they once did they still love the things it is used to describe.

There are baseball metaphors in all aspects of life, and some may not even be easily recognizable as baseball metaphor. But, the spread of these metaphor and the use of baseball as a metaphor for other things makes it clear that baseball has cemented its place in American culture. Its language is used not only on the diamond, but in the home, the workplace, and just about everywhere else.

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is something religion sees too as people seem to have moved away from it more and although being religious is not as prominent as it once was there are still plenty of religious people.