

## The Time I Realized Baseball Was More Than Just a Game

Growing up, baseball was merely background noise in my life— a sport that some of the closest people in my life loved dearly, but one I never fully understood. Little did I know a single ballgame would bridge a gap between our worlds, teaching me more about connection and the human spirit than I knew at age 13.

The game happened to be Game 6 of the 2016 National League Championship Series. The Chicago Cubs, my papa and dad's beloved team, appeared in the NLCS in 2015 and faced a harsh sweep by the New York Mets. Still, the Cubs had not won the World Series in over a century, and the air was thick with anticipation as my family gathered around the TV, their hopeful eyes glued to the screen.

As the game progressed, I found myself glancing at the TV from the dining room table. At the time I didn't understand what was going on, but my family's reactions intrigued me. I realized the game held a lot more weight than I thought when I heard my family shouting for joy at the successful double play that secured the Cubs a chance to win the World Series. The eruption of cheers and tears that followed the Cubs' victory against the Los Angeles Dodgers was unlike anything I had ever experienced. I had seen the way my family reacted when the Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup in 2010, 2013, and 2015, but it did not compare. At the age of 77, my Papa jumped off the couch and landed on his knees once the ball landed in Anthony Rizzo's glove. I have never seen him jump so high. At that moment, I realized that baseball was much more than a game.

In the days that followed, I couldn't shake the feeling of unity and triumph that had happened that night. I found myself viewing the sport with newfound appreciation and I could not wait to join my family on the couch this time for the World Series.

The victory was all the sweeter when I realized my papa had been waiting his whole life to see his team win. I am eternally grateful that I got to see the joy on my Papa's face. His happiness was contagious, and it made me realize the power of sports to unite generations and create lasting memories. My brother and I talk about that game to this day, and how happy we are that our Papa saw them win before he died in 2018.

"He launched himself off the couch and dropped to his knees... That was great— that was awesome," my brother, Anthony, said. "I was surprised he could do that— he looked like a little kid."

This once "unimportant" sport became something very dear to me. Baseball became louder in my life. As I continue to cherish the memories of that night, I am reminded that sometimes, the most profound moments in life can happen when we least expect them.