



Looking For Stormy Weather

by James Seidler

FLYMF November 2005, The Brought To You By Carpediem Issue, Volume 2 Issue 11

Oh, to be a fair-weather fan. How sweet life must be for them, a new surprise waiting around every corner. Last year's Schilling becomes this fall's Konerko, Brady segues into, well, Brady, and a whole closet of caps awaits them, each still unfaded, reflecting a dozen moments of a lifetime.

I've had my chances to join their ranks. This year's World Series was only the most recent. It would even be a nice story—baseball fan moves back to Chicago just in time to see the local team rebound from a lengthy slump into the playoffs. From there, they sweep the defending champs, roll through the next round with the help of some spectacular, if dubious, calls, and then beat the stuffing out of the National League champs. The whole city rallies behind them—the newspapers (even the one that owns Chicago's *other* team) are putting them on the front page and adding special sections to follow their progress. Their games are all that anyone can talk about on the radio. The freeway billboards even overlook their usual bleary duty of broadcasting how long you're going to be stuck to celebrate the team's wins.

The city's been waiting for a World Series win for eighty-eight years. "Finally," is on everyone's lips, and all that you have to do to join them is pick up a black cap and cheer with everyone else at the local bar as the favorites win. And when they do win, you could slap hands and jump around and maybe even cry a bit if you're the emotional type, never once worrying that you'd never cared about this particular team before a month ago.

That sounds pretty nice.

So what did I do? I pretended that the whole thing wasn't happening. Out of some sense of loyalty, or idiocy, or both, I watched each game with a bit of bile in my mouth. But that's not even true—I couldn't even bring myself to watch most of them. I tuned in at the end, hoping that the whole thing would be taken care of without my involvement, that the White Sox would flake off like a scab that you haven't been paying attention to.

I couldn't quite bring myself to cheer against them; that just seemed pathetic. They were from Chicago, after all, and by the time the World Series rolled around they were playing the Houston Astros, another long-time Cubs nemesis. So I had to settle for cheering for the impossible instead. Maybe the entire Sox squad could be caught syringe-in-ass as Bud Selig came in for the pre-game handshake. Or maybe, in a development echoing the Sox's most notorious World Series moment, *both* teams could be caught trying to throw the Series. In fact, looking back at the games we got, that may have been what happened, only nobody told Jermaine Dye.

The White Sox haven't been my only temptation, though. I've had other chances to stray. I spent the past two years in graduate school at the University of Southern California, during which time their football team lost one game and won two national championships. Last year's team, one of the greatest in college football history, practiced right outside my teaching building. All that I had to do to be a vicarious winner was walk over to the student ticket office and buy a season pass. What's the problem?

Well, the problem is that I grew up in South Bend, IN, where I graduated from the University of Notre Dame, the same school that my mom and grandfather also happened to graduate from. I grew up cheering for both of Curtis Conway's legs to fall off.

Needless to say, the only game I went to in the Coliseum was when Notre Dame came to town in 2004. They lost 41-10. Pete Carroll even had the decency to go for a fake punt late in the game—one last little "fuck you" before the final whistle blew.

Sitting in the stands afterwards, watching thousands of happy Trojan fans jump and celebrate, a thought came to me: maybe I *want* to be unhappy.

Maybe, in some sick way, I gravitate towards the teams I know will lose in the most heartbreaking way possible. Maybe I've stuck with the teams of my birthplace—the Cubs, the Bears, the Fighting Irish—not out of a sense of loyalty, but because they offer the valuable life lesson that everything *doesn't* turn out all right, and in the rare case that it looks like it will, Matt Leinart's sure to pass for a sixty-yard completion on fourth and nine. And then fuck your girlfriend afterwards.

That's pretty depressing. But the facts seem to bear it out (except for the girlfriend fucking, I hope). When the Bulls started winning all of their championships in the 1990's, I had to stop cheering for them for a while. They were too popular—rooting for them to win was like hoping for John Grisham to top the best-seller list. It wasn't until the Bulls became terrible that I felt comfortable supporting them again.

So, I guess I'm a Bizarro fan—I'd rather be with the team in the rough years, then drift away just when things are getting good. But in a way, that makes sense. After all, as the cliché says, getting there is half the fun. And the fair-weather fan, I say, is someone who mistakes masturbation for sex.