

OP-ED

Straight Talk

Robert Caton
Capital Times Staff

So baseball has ended its strike, and we will soon be able to gorge ourselves on the national pastime once again.

Big, fat, hairy deal.

Why do Americans have such a cow over baseball? I spent about 16 hours arguing the finer points of the game with my friend, who I'll call...Meathead (not his real name, but it should be). Meathead is your average baseball fan, the type of guy who would turn his grandmother over to the Metallica road crew in exchange for tickets to a Cleveland Indians-Seattle Mariners tripleheader.

"But Bob, baseball is such a classic game! (*God Bless America* begins to play) It's our (hushed, reverent tone) NATIONAL PASTIME!

Right. Killing Indians used to be our national pastime too, but it's sort of frowned upon today. Baseball was invented merely to prove to the English that we could come up with a game more boring than soccer.

"Baseball players are ROLE MODELS!"

Good point...every kid in America should grow up to be like Luis "I should play hockey, cuz I can score before the first period," Polonia, who at least had the good sense not to videotape his "hobby." Or how about Steve Garvey, who puts the phrase "Father of our Country" into new perspective? Maybe Darryl "Don't drive drunk, play drunk" Strawberry? Dwight "What kind of white powder IS that baseline made of" Gooden? Or the all time classic...Pete "I'll lay ya ten to one I don't have a gambling problem" Rose.

The worst part is, Americans accept these morons as heroes! If I were to be caught with a pound of cocaine, I sure wouldn't be told I had "an illness," given a month in a country club rehab center doing primal scream therapy with Chevy Chase, and then be given two million bucks a year to PLAY A GAME again as if nothing ever happened. I'd be in the state pen married to the guy who has the most cigarettes.

But baseball players are assigned such a mythic quality by people; they are essentially above the law! If a teacher were caught with coke, he or she would be drawn and quartered because of

"negative influence on children." Well, a hell of a lot more kids listen to Keith Hernandez than to their local science teacher.

Maybe I'm overreacting...the average kid these days is more concerned with unscrambling the old man's "Playboy Channel" than remembering Jose Canseco's batting average after a breakfast of oat bran muffins and tequila, anyway.

"Uh, well...going TO a baseball game is pure magic!"

I remember my last trip to Veterans Stadium in Philly. A two-hour drive in blazing heat to see the Philthys take on the Cincinnati Reds. Nothing like paying some itinerant lettuce picker four bucks to park in his makeshift lot (which he created by knocking over all the tombstones), hiking to the stadium and getting my free promotion (It was Rodriguez's Crack Dealership Bat Day).

There's an intelligent move...supplying weaponry to people who will be slamming down beers before the gas even escapes from the cans--people who are already insane enough with baseball worship to kill without provocation. What's next...Smith and Wesson Semi-Automatic Rifle Day?

I climb to my seat, paying two bucks for a program (100 pages of ads), four bucks for a hot dog (sold to me by a

man pulling his shorts out of his crack with one hand, and handing me my hot dog, sans napkin, with the other) and three bucks for a CAN of beer.

My seat was rather distant (Sec. ZZZZZZZ, Row 146), which had its advantages. The old man next to me with the two-foot cigar was able to light his matches off the bottom of passing 747's.

The usherettes were ugly, the management stopped our "Pete Rose sucks" chant after only 378 choruses, and the plays were easy to see--assuming you had a telescope.

Baseball is definitely all-American...you pay tons of cash to get essentially nothing but a sunburn.

"uh...um...er."
At this point, Meathead was quivering, and tears were beginning to form in his eyes as he clutched his "Official Orel Hershiser Blow-Up Doll."

I decided to let him live...who knows...after four or five cases of cheap domestic brew...maybe I WILL care what an infield fly is.

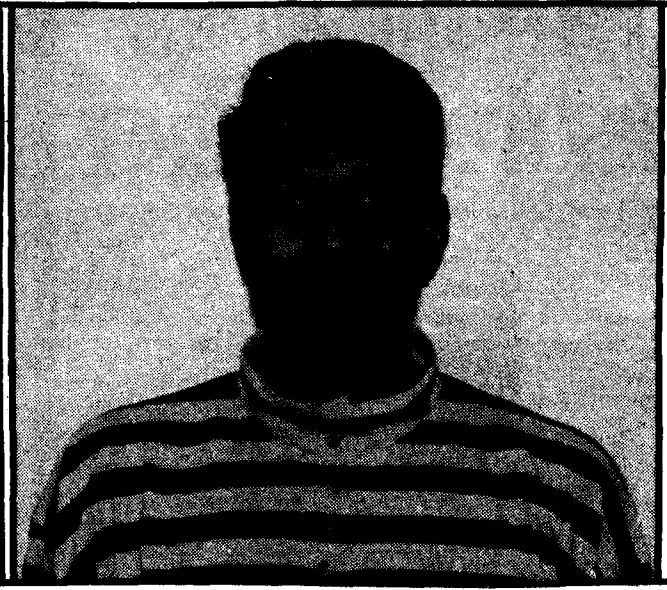
Until next time...

Editor's Note: Straight Talk from Robert Caton is new to the Cap. Times. Look for it to appear regularly in future issues.

Students Speak out: What Do you think?

Students were asked the following questions concerning the recent Soviet invasion of Lithuania: 1. How do you think the recent Soviet invasion of Lithuania will affect the democratic reforms that have been sweeping through Eastern Europe? 2. Do you feel that Gorbachev's developing image as a peacemaker has been destroyed?

Photo by: Richard Chiavetta



Kimberly A. Murray
Major: Accounting
Age: 20

Terry Clark
Major: Public Policy
Age: 23

Lori Gouldy
Major: Business Management
Age: 22

1. I don't think we can speculate about the affect this event will have on the reforms in Eastern Europe.

2. No, Gorbachev has been involved, directly or indirectly, with so many positive events that the image he has created has not been significantly damaged.

1. I think it will have a negative affect on some of the democratic reforms, because the only reason Gorbachev invaded Lithuania to begin with was because he was afraid of the amount of money that would be lost in investments if Lithuania was independent of the Soviet Union.

2. No. I wouldn't say it has been destroyed. Although I would say it has been hurt a little--especially to those Americans who thought that he was becoming more and more generous.

1. It could be a minor setback, but it really shouldn't affect the other countries of Eastern Europe.

2. To a point it has because, as everyone knows, he hasn't been handling the situation too well.