

Editorial: Is it Time for the MLB All-Star Game to Let Its Hair Down?

Written by Maury Brown
Tuesday, 14 July 2009 02:13



I'm pretty sure what you're about to read will not sit well with most of you. But, after seeing the direction that the All-Star Game has headed, it seems to me it's time for MLB and the game itself to throw back a couple, get loose, and stop masquerading as an event that has true meaning.

The All-Star Game is now pussyfooting around with the event stuck in purgatory between "sports" and "entertainment".

I'm not saying that one or the other is bad; I'm saying quit monkeying around and pick a path. Playing both sides of the fence is hurting its standing in both realms.

Case in point: if you're going to allow fans to vote not once, not twice, but 25 times on MLB.com for the All-Star ballot, then you're dealing in entertainment.

If you're going to give home field advantage to the AL or NL in the World Series to the winner of the All-Star Game, then you're playing the "serious sporting event" card.

You can't have it both ways.

So, as baseball seems intent on moving closer and closer into making the All-Star Game its premiere entertainment event, I say it's time for the ASG to let its hair down.

First off, disconnect the All-Star Game from any part of home field advantage for the World Series. It was a grand experiment that wasn't given its due when MLB decided to give the game

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a more carnival-like atmosphere. You want to have the sports world consider it a “serious” event? Fine, remove fan voting for all but the final two roster spots and let the players select who they think should play. It’s not a perfect solution, but short of some convoluted rating system outside of the BBWAA’s control, I’m open to suggestion for something better.

With the game moving head-long into the entertainment sphere, host a mid-game concert event, ala the Super Bowl. I can hear the teeth gnashing now, and screams of “it will break the rhythm of the game.” Yeah, well, baseball has dealt with a plethora of rain delays over its lifetime, and somehow players are able to get back into the game and keep it going. If the game is a platform to highlight the players that the fans wish to see – the best or not – then why not embrace the entertainment side? After all, MLB (or for that matter the NBA and NHL) only has the All-Star Game as its single event moment. They don’t have a “winner takes all” championship like the NFL, so get as many eyeballs on the game as possible. As mentioned, you’re already pussyfooting around with a Homerun Derby, a Celebrity Softball Game, and fan-rigged rosters, so go for the gusto. While we’re at it, there should be near nuclear pyrotechnics infused into the game. Make anything that NBA teams have done look like ladyfingers hitting the street. Make the game so incredibly bombastic and different than its normally placid self that non-baseball fans will clear their calendar year in and year out to see this one game and it will become the stuff of legend around the watercooler the next day.

Have we pushed into the realm of the absurd? Sure, but doesn’t it seem we’re sliding this way now? It’s not the All-Star Game, it’s the ratings game for the league. So, MLB, get your ratings.

At this point, I assume if Bud Selig and the rest of the league is reading their heads are exploding. True, but don’t think some network exec isn’t nodding their head and rubbing hands together as only Mr. Burns would do. Don’t think that someone at FOX hasn’t had dreams of such game.

In the end, it’s what I said in the beginning: most of this will not sit well with the majority of readers. So, baseball, turn the ship around and get it headed in the right direction. Either make the All-Star Game a Busby Berkeley extravaganza or make it a game that truly has meaning for the Championship season. If you think the rosters are looking like the best that the league has to offer, why don’t you ask what Ian Kinsler and Pablo Sandoval think? Get the game out purgatory and into one pool or the other. The All-Star Game is suffering from an identity crisis.

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