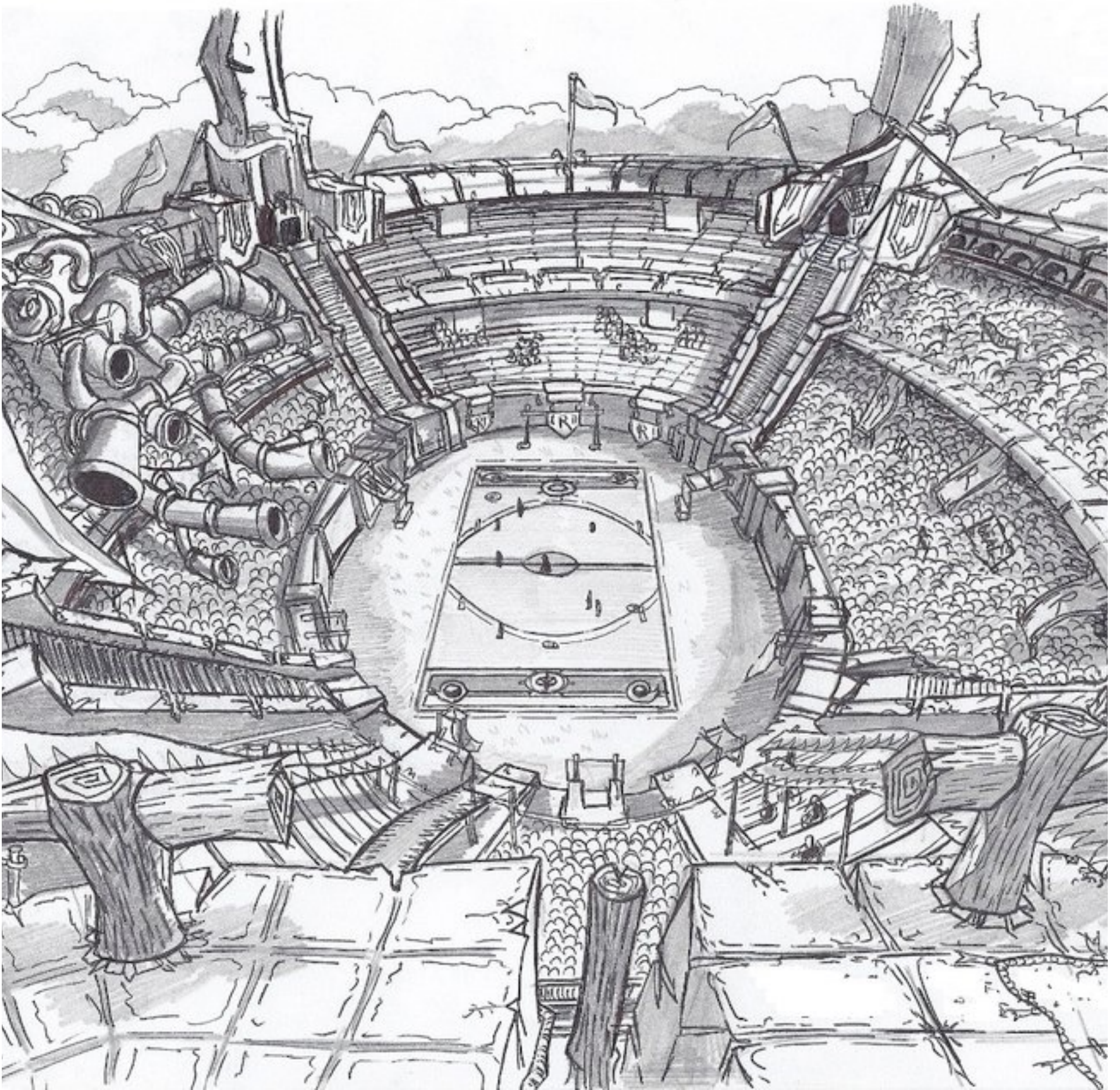


No. 20

Journey Planet





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JOURNEY PLANET

December 2014

Your Editorial Starting Line-up

James Bacon ~ Christopher J Garcia ~ Helen J. Montgomery

Comments / Content?
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EDITORIAL BY HELEN J MONTGOMERY

This is my third Guest Editing gig with *Journey Planet*, and I absolutely *loved* doing this issue. The prior issues (Gender Parity and Social Media) were great, but they were about more serious issues in fandom. I'm really proud of both of them, mind you, but they were more emotionally draining to put together.

This year, I had idea for an issue, two issues back-to-back actually, that I wanted to do. I had wanted to do it at the end of 2013, but real life hit hard. So I thought I might do it this year, but found myself rather worn out after Loncon 3. I finally decided that this wasn't the year, I had to do some self-care, and there just wouldn't be an issue of *Journey Planet* from me in 2014 (and I was going to be really, really, really, bitter if it turned out *Journey Planet* wins a Hugo Award in 2015!).

Then, I got an email from Chris and James suggesting that we do an issue of *Journey Planet* about sports. Sports fandom, science fiction fandom, and the overlapping area of the Venn Diagram. Would I be interested in guest editing such an issue?

I promptly decided that self-care can take many forms, and my self-care was going to be editing this issue of *Journey Planet*.

This issue was just so much fun. I'm a huge sports fan - hockey, soccer, football (American, pro), baseball...love 'em. I will cheerfully talk about sports with anyone, anywhere, just as I will talk to anyone, anywhere about science fiction and conventions and Worldcon. The importance of both sports fandom and science fiction fandom in my life is immeasurable. To have an opportunity to write about it? And to get lots of other people to write about it? GAME ON!

Many thanks to all the contributors, and also to those who weren't able to contribute an article, but contributed in their support and enthusiasm for the idea. We have personal stories, sports history, sports in science fiction, and also a few pieces of fiction. I think that we have created a really fun issue here, and I hope you all enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed putting it together.

Thanks again to Chris and James for inviting me to once again be part of the *Journey Planet* team!

Go Sports!



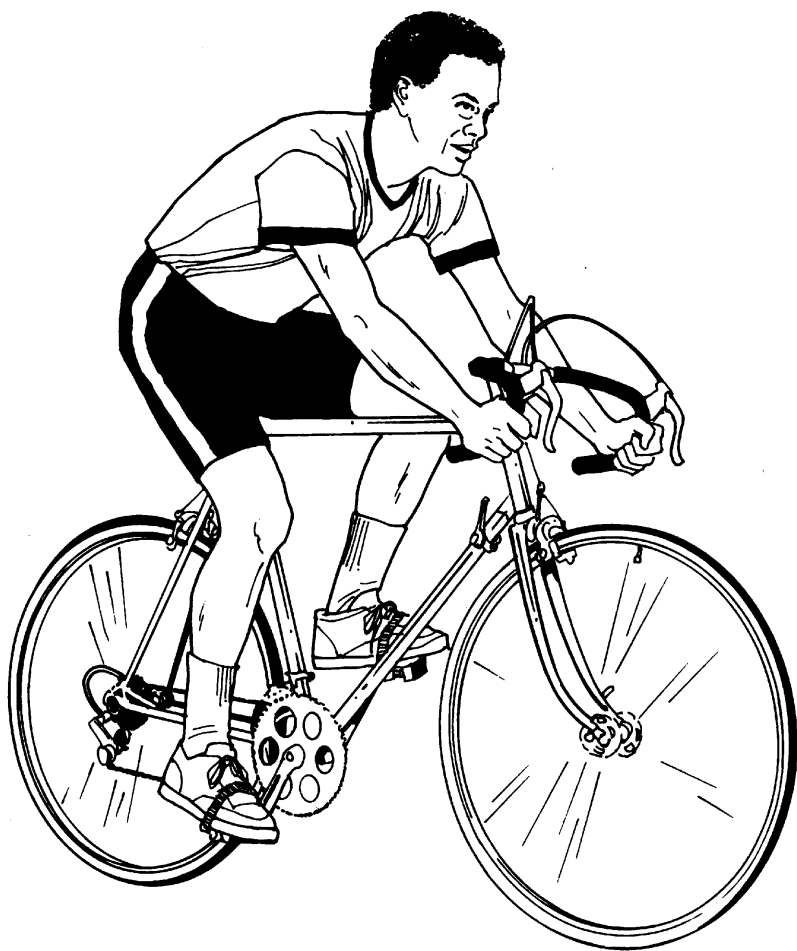
INSTANT FANZINE VIA FACEBOOK

Question #1: Your Fave Convention vs The Championship Game (and your team is in it) - Same weekend. Can't go to both. Which do you choose and why?

Brian Rogers - I have always gone to the convention and hoped that I could start a party in my room or the consuite to watch the game.

David Stein - One year Marcon had Bill and Brenda Sutton were invited as GOHs. Bill is a huge Indy 500 fan (as am I), so his only request was time off to watch the race. It went round a bit and in the end we ended up in big comfy chairs next to the hotel bar(with an open tab) and he and I hosted an Indy 500 Watching Party as a programming item, do play-by-play for those who came and joined us. One of my favorite programming items ever.

Edward Hooper - Well, since the World Series is in October (my conventions are in November, January, and February) there is no conflict. But for sake of argument: If my favorite convention moved to World Series week, and Los Angeles Dodgers and/or the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim were in it, I'd go



“Somewhere behind the athlete you’ve become and the hours of practice and the coaches who have pushed you is a little girl who fell in love with the game and never looked back... play for her.” – Mia Hamm

to one game during the series and the rest of the convention. Best of both worlds!

Helen Montgomery - I'm totally amused that thus far, everyone has managed to come up with a way to do both instead of actually choosing. :)

Ed Hooper - That's the way of SF fans: making a third choice.

Brian Rogers - We are, by definition, those people that find answers to questions that aren't "normal".

Jeffrey Allen Beeler - Convention you can watch the game there or get home early on Sunday to watch the game.

Liz Batty - The only sport I follow (cycling) has races that last three weeks, so there is rarely a single day that is absolutely unmissable. If there was a particularly great stage on during a convention I'd probably sneak off to watch the last half hour in my hotel room. I guess if I'd had to choose between seeing the start of the Tour de France this year and a convention I would probably have chosen the Tour, because they started a stage in my old home town and that will probably never happen again. But it's rare that the calendar causes any awkward clashes, except for the time I was sneakily watching the race during a committee meeting.

Dave O'Neill - Define 'Championship' - in terms of the sports I follow I can't really think of one that would be worth it. OTOH if we were talking Rugby World Cup, then that would win.

Christopher J Garcia I had to make that choice once... well, it was between WrestleMania and a con. I took the Con and had a pay-per-view party!

Steven R. McKinzey - I would choose the convention over the game because I like to be around friends and people I know in a relaxed quiet and comfortable environment. A championship game would be loud, crowded and filled with people I don't know. At a convention I would have the opportunity to learn something new and meet new people. At a game just more strangers and nothing really to learn. At a convention I am control of my own schedule and it last for more than a couple of hours. A game would only give me a short amount of entertainment at a specified time then it is over. I usually bring something back home from a convention that offers more than a bunch of people competing over a ball.

Ed Hooper - Who says you have to go alone to a game? I went with my brother to Game 5 of the 1981 World Series (Dodgers v. Yankees @ Dodger Stadium) and had a great time. In 2004 I went to a Red Sox game (v. Angels) with friends during Noreascon 4. The tickets were a wedding present from Michael Mason. We interacted with the locals, mainly because of the Angels hat I was wearing. Everyone had a great time.

Sandra Levy - If I had the chance to actually go to the Championship game, I would do that rather than go to the convention. If I'm watching the game on TV, I would do that at the convention.

Sandra Levy - And the why of it. Fave cons, come by every year. Championship team of my favorite team, not so often. Seeing a game live is an amazing experience. But if watching it on TV, a group of friends at the con would be lots of fun.

John Ickes - I thought running conventions WAS a championship game.?

Tim Dinan - I would most likely go to Con but sit in the bar to watch the game.

Hank Fenson - I'd choose the championship game. When I was little I dreamt a million times of making that perfect slap shot and hoisting the Stanley Cup. I never dreamt of a crowd going wild as I answered panel questions about the impact of zombie films on popular culture.

Chris Krolczyk - The con. You can always record the game. You can't record your experiences at a con and watch them later (unless you were dumb enough to allow someone to follow you and your ensuing wacky hijinks around with a video camera 24/7, that is. In which case it's probably one of *those* conventions...)

Tannis Baldwin - Sporting event, because the way my team plays it might be the only time I get to see them in a championship.





Question #2:
What bets
have you
made with
fannish friends
over sports
(keep it PG-13
please!)?

Dave McCarty - So far I can only remember the one bet.

Helen Montgomery - Which is definitely not PG-13. :-P

Helen Montgomery - I can't stop laughing....

Christopher J Garcia - Wasn't there one that led to a WorldCon bid?

Helen Montgomery - I'm sure there were many of those, although none between Dave and I.

Warren Buff - Chris Barkley and I bet breakfast at Worldcon on the result of NC State and Cincinnati in football two years running. He paid out in Reno, I paid out in Chicago. Speaking of which, there's a basketball game between our schools coming up. Care to make it round three, Chris?

Hank Fenson - Helen Montgomery's hatred of the Blackhawks is so intense she wouldn't even be seen with me. I bet Jerry Gilio that he couldn't get her to pose for a photo with me. She resisted until he pointed out, "You don't have to be nice to him." She strangled me on camera until I lost consciousness and the bet.

Helen Montgomery - One of my favorite photos EVAR.

Tim Miller - Yes, Christopher J Garcia, there was a bet on a world series that led to a worldcon bid. I still hate you.

Sandra Levy - Not a betting person, so I never have. Oh well, maybe I'll have an answer for the next question.

“I read the sports page, but only the league standings. I prefer general trends over specific results.”
Chris Garcia

Chris Krolczyk - Dave Kovarik and I have a running annual NFL pick 'em contest with a singularly Pythonesque set of prizes: first place gets a can of creamed corn. Second place gets a can of kraut juice. I'm *not making this up*.

Dave Hogg - I'm still trying to think of a bet to make with you...

Helen Montgomery - Dave Hogg as we cheer for the same teams, we'd end up having to bet on some obscure statistical outcome or something! The point spread, final season standings, Cabrera's batting average...



Question #3:
Meeting as SF fans,
bonding as sports
fans. Have you met
someone at a SF
convention, but
didn't really
connect until you
found a shared
love of sport? Or
perhaps bonding
over sports
deepened the
friendship? Share
your story!

RJ Johnson - This reminds me of how I came into Chicago fandom because of Thursdays, Rich Ros-trom, Terry Forster's hitting card and the Howard Street League. If I can carve out the time to write it up, I will.

Tim Miller - It was at N4. I had gotten to see my Texas Rangers play at Fenway the say before the convention so I was already in a sportsy mood. One night I was supposed to be helping with the Texas Fandom party but I had to leave because of real world political talk that was puss in me off, so I went across the hall and was hanging out at the Chicago 2008 party. I started talking to this cute blonde girl about hockey, as the Hockey World Cup was going on. Turns out she was a Red-wings fan. I really HATE the Redwings. We have been friends ever since.

Helen Montgomery - Love you too, Tim Miller!

Chris Krolczyk - I know of at least six hockey fans who I know in fandom, including you, me, Den-nis Dombrowski, Dave Kovarik, Sondra de Jong, Marinda Darnell, and...er...what was the question again...?

Jeffery Allen Beeler - I still remember the time I got together with about 4 other local SF fans to watch Michigan Football win the national championship!



"I always turn to
the sports pages
first, which records
people's
accomplishments.
The front page has
nothing but man's
failures."
Earl Warren

Dave Hogg - I've never figured out the correlation between fandom and hockey, but I end up in more hockey conversations at cons than every other sport combined. You, on the other hand, are fun to talk to about anything! My actual answer to the question, though, would be that I met someone at ConFusion years ago, and one of the things we bonded over was our mutual love of the NFL. She ended up being in our wedding ... and there's also a sports-betting story with her as well. :)

Jerry Gilio I've known Jessica Williams for years at cons, but we've bonded over our love of the Blackhawks. One late night at a con a friend asked me, "Why was that girl hugging you?" I told him, "Oh, Jess was showing me how they were holding Toews in the game last night."





Question #4: this one is purely hypothetical. If, for whatever reason you wish to imagine, you were forced to choose between giving up your sports fandom or your science fiction fandom - which would you choose and why?

Roxanne King - Don't make me choose! The best weekend ever was when Musecon was three miles from the Tour of Elk Grove Village two years ago.

Helen Montgomery - You must choose. Horrible things will happen if you don't. :)

Janice Gelb - I'd hate to have to make this choice but I'd give up sports fandom: science fiction fandom for me is largely about the people and much as I love following sports, the players don't actually much care whether I'm supporting them :->

Dave Hogg - If I lost my SF fandom, I'd still have my friends. If I lost my sports fandom, my job would *really* suck.

Michelle Rhoades I have the same problem as Dave there, but I'd still rather give up my sports fandom. My SF fandom keeps me sane.

Hank Fenson - I'd have to give up sports fandom. It's disappointed me more over the years. (I'm looking at you, Cubs.)



FANDOM(S) CHANGED MY LIFE

2 BY HELEN MONTGOMERY



Fandom(s) Changed My Life

I've attempted to piece together the timeline of when my fandoms started. As a child, I was introduced to reading science fiction and fantasy by my Mom, although conventions would not have ever been her thing. Also during childhood, I was introduced to baseball (Detroit Tigers) and Football (Detroit Lions) by my Dad.

As a teenager, several of my girlfriends and I somehow ended up following the Detroit Red Wings hockey team. I am not ashamed to admit that the crush I've had on the former Captain, Steve Yzerman, is the longest romantic relationship I've ever had. Beyond the hormones, I quickly fell in love with the sport as well - it's fast, it's physical, and the talent required to shoot a little rubber puck past a guy in lots of padding in front of a relatively small net, *all while on ice skates*, is awe inspiring. There's a tenacity that is required, a mental toughness to get through a season that can last for 9 months (if you're lucky), and again, it's awe inspiring. I have, during tough times, reminded myself that whatever it is I'm going through, it's not as tough as hockey,

Side story – in 2011, John Picacio was the Artist GoH for Capricon, and I ran programming that year. After Capricon, many people were all excited because John had accepted their friend requests on FB. I, on the other hand, lost my damn mind when he sent me a friend request!

and StevieY wouldn't be grumbling. Sounds weird, but it's often worked, so I'm gonna roll with it.

Also as a teenager, my brother began playing soccer, and my Dad went and was trained to be a coach, so I began watching soccer games and learning that sport. During my senior year of high school, our soccer team actually did really well and gained a following, and I ended up at many of the games – occasionally taking photos for our school newspaper. Another sport that was fast, physical, and also required tenacity and mental toughness, in addition to physical stamina – like hockey, but with a ball and on grass. Loved it.

Heading off into college, I was still a huge reader of SF and Fantasy, and still a huge sports fan. Weirdly, I didn't really connect with that many people in college over either, although definitely more SF/F than sports. (Small, private, liberal arts college...) My connections there were over theater and alcohol. (Because, you know, college.)

How SF/F Fandom Changed My Life

There was, however, one SF connection that I'm either blaming or thanking, because without her, my life would be unrecognizable. Tracy Lunquist. She invited me along to a concert in Champaign (The Last Gentlemen) around the time of my birthday in January 1991, where I met some of my long-time-now SF fannish friends – including the guy who eventually would end up my partner for 16 years and my co-conspirator on many fannish activities, Dave McCarty. But that happened later. Hooked up with a different guy that weekend at the concert (college, remember, no judging), and in February headed out to Chicago with Tracy for my very first Capricon, where I could also meet up with said guy from the concert.

From there, I attended some of the Conamazooos that Tracy ran in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. Ended things with Concert Guy, and at some point in 1993, got together with Dave for the long run, moved to Chicago after graduation, and my fannish lifestyle exploded.

Running Capricons, Worldcon bidding, losing, and winning, running Worldcons, attending conventions. So much of my life is wrapped up in SF/F fandom – I can't even imagine how things would have turned out had I not attended that concert in 1991. I have a hobby that eats up huge amounts of my free time and money and I love it. I've been nominated for a Hugo Award (twice!) thanks to my friendships with Chris and James. I have more friends in cities and countries than I can count. My friends list on Facebook is mostly friends from SF fandom by an overwhelming amount. I've met authors and artists whom I admired and squee'd over, and now they're on my Facebook friends list!

So without Tracy and The Last Gentlemen, my life today would be radically different. Would I have ever found SF fandom on my own? Would it have been in Chicago? Would I be attending only, or would I have ended up working as a conrunner? Would I have ever figured out this “fan-zine” thing? Would I have ever been nominated for a Hugo Award? Anything is possible, but I find it highly unlikely.

How Sports Fandom Changed My Life

Memories of this fandom go way, way, way back. I have vivid memories of going to Tiger Stadium with my Dad as a kid. I remember getting to go on the field with my dance class several times, and have a photo somewhere of me with with Alan Trammell. I vividly remember the Roar of '84 and the Tigers winning the World Series. There is a long-standing family tradition on Thanksgiving Day – go watch the Lions lose at the Silverdome, then go home and eat turkey. The primary connection I have with my Dad and brother is rooted in sports, and loving the Detroit teams. Family is a bond, but sports just make the bond stronger.

Moving to Chicago was hard – this is a town filled with hated rivals. Bears (phooey!), White Sox (icky!), and the <expletives redacted> Blackhawks (<more expletives redacted>). It took a long time to find my people here. I mostly felt very alone rooting for Detroit. Probably because I usually *was* alone rooting for Detroit, sitting on the couch in my living room.

In 1999, I decided to go to grad school and get my Masters Degree in Social Work. On the first day of classes, I headed down to campus, wearing a Red Wings jersey. Hockey players are tenacious, filled with determination, willing to persevere through anything in order to succeed. It seemed a fitting choice for the first day of grad school.

Sitting in the “social work circle”, as we came to call it, we all started introducing ourselves. I mentioned that I was originally from the Detroit area. A few people later, a woman says “I'm Katy. I'm also from Detroit and I'm also a Red Wings fan!”

I was a bridesmaid in her wedding a few years later.

Back during the 2000 Stanley Cup playoffs, Katy and I decided to seek out other Detroit fans in the Chicago area, figuring that if we failed, we at least wouldn't be drinking alone in a strange bar. We headed to the Gin Mill, a MSU bar (I tried to overlook that fact, being a U-M fan),



“A rabid sports fan is one that boos a TV set.” - Jimmy Cannon



and also a big Red Wings bar. Both of us wearing Yzerman jerseys, we were eventually approached by one of the regulars, Tommy. He began calling us “The Co-Captains” and we were absorbed into his group of fans.

I finally found my people. Tommy, Brie, Mike, Ellen, Beth. Some of the team has moved away, but those of us who remain meet up regularly for the playoffs at the bar (we’re now at The Tin Lizzie, which has the most addictive cheezy bread **ever**) and I’ve brought new people along for the ride as I meet them. Those who have left keep in touch via Facebook – we all comment on the game as it’s happening and then comment on each other’s’ comments. It’s a lot of fun and a great way to stay connected.

In 1998, Dave McCarty and I, along with four other fannish friends, became season ticket holders for the Chicago Fire soccer club. A new expansion team of Major League Soccer, I finally had a Chicago based team I could cheer for without guilt – Detroit doesn’t have a MLS franchise! For many years, Dave and I remained season ticket holders. We attended MLS Cup Finals and U.S. Open Cup Finals. We went and saw matches in other cities if we happened to be in town when there was a game. We traveled several times to England to see English Premier League matches (Arsenal vs Manchester United, at Old Trafford – absolutely amazing experience!). Remember my friend Beth from the Gin Mill? I hooked her on soccer – she’s now a rabid Liverpool fan.

In 2010, I went with my brother and sister-in-law, and her family, to South Africa for the World Cup. We rapidly changed our travel plans when the U.S. advanced to the Round of 16 so that my brother and I could go to the match in Rustenburg. I own two vuvuzelas now.

Without sports, I might not have ever connected with one of my best friends. I would never have bonded with strangers in a bar. I would never have attended the celebratory parades in downtown Detroit with my brother when the Red Wings finally brought home the Stanley Cup. I wouldn’t have a Thanksgiving tradition to carry on with my brother and my niece. I wouldn’t have attended two Winter Classic games. I wouldn’t have gone to South Africa for the World Cup with my brother. I would have had fewer trips to England. The travel experiences alone that I would have missed out on – so many memories I wouldn’t have.

Intersections, or “Gosh, They Seemed So Nice...”

As a Red Wings fan, there are certain teams that I am required to hate. With a fiery passion in my soul. Every fiber of my being. We *hates* them, precious.

“A trophy carries
dust. Memories last
forever.”

Mary Lou Retton

One of these teams for many years was the Dallas Stars. Originally from Minnesota (eh!), the North Stars up and left the "North" part behind in 1993.

Jump forward 10 years - to Noreascon 4. In August of that year, Dave McCarty, my partner at the time, agreed to take on chairing the Chicago in 2008 Worldcon Bid. So off we went to N4 a mere two weeks later. N4 was my first real Worldcon. I had briefly attended Chicon 2000, but only for a day because I was a poor grad student at the time. N4 was pretty amazing - the concourse, the Mended Drum, and of course, loads of new people to meet.

Chicago in 2008 was throwing a party at N4. We were told that we couldn't cook, so the "hot dog cake" was brought out for the first time to much glorious acclaim. Anyway, I'm sitting behind the bid table and this guy comes up to me, introduces himself as Tim, and we began chatting. I was delighted to find out that he is a fan of hockey! I was devastated to learn that he is a Dallas Stars fan. I'm pretty sure he had the exact same reaction when he learned I'm a Wings fan.

Nonetheless, we persevered, and Tim Miller became the first Worldcon Fandom friend I made. We found that we could completely agree on one thing - Blackhawks SUCK!

Over the years, as I met more and more people in Worldcon fandom, I discovered that so many of us also love sports. Hockey, football, soccer, baseball, basketball, rugby, cricket, cycling... I rarely go to a convention that doesn't involve a conversation or three about sports.

Most of these friends root for non-Detroit teams. (I know, they're barbarians. They just haven't realized it yet. I await their moment of enlightenment.) But it's okay - we all love the sport as well as the teams, so we can talk about the sport, and also get the added bonus of trash talking the other's team. I get to have fun bets with fans about sporting events. But that's a different article.

In December 2013, SMOFcon was held in Toronto, mere blocks away from the Hockey Hall of Fame. My neighbors' ears may still be ringing from the SQUEE that I let out when I realized that I could *walk there from the hotel*!!! And walk there we did - me in my Wings sweater, Joel Phillips representing Minnesota, Jim Mann in a Penguins t-shirt, Tim in his Stars sweater, and Dave Gallaher in his traditional tropical print shirt (but I believe the color scheme was that of the San Jose Sharks). Three of us (me, Tim, and Jim) had a group photo with the Stanley Cup, which always makes me smile when I look at it.

One of the best fannish and sports combo fandom moments that I have ever had, and I don't know that anything will ever top it. What's awesome, though, is that with these and other friends who intersect in my two fandoms, there will be many other opportunities to try.

Go sports!





MY DOUBLE LIFE BY DAVE HOGG

For the past 25 years, I've been living a double life that would impress Clark Kent and Peter Parker.

Like them, I'm a journalist by day and ... well, OK, they are superheroes at night, and I'm just a nerd. And as a sportswriter, I'm actually a journalist at night most of the time, but work with me here. You get the idea.

When I started doing this in 1990, I got exactly the reaction you would expect. People in the sports world couldn't figure out why I wanted to hang out with a bunch of geeks, and my friends in fandom didn't understand why I cared about the jocks that had picked on us in high school.

For me, though, it was just two things I enjoyed. I played and watched sports constantly as a kid, and I was still a pretty good soccer player until I wrecked my knee in high school. I learned math by figuring out batting averages, and my heroes were hockey players. My costume every Halloween was Ken Dryden of the Montreal Canadiens.

At the same time, there were Star Trek and Doctor Who reruns and dozens of books by Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke, the Dune novels and everything else I could find at the used bookstore. As I write this, I'm looking at the Hugo nominees from the mid-1970s, and I'm amazed at how many of them I've read -- these are stories that were coming out when I was seven and eight years old.

As a college senior, I got a chance to work as a sportswriter for the Associated Press. It took me about seven seconds to accept, and I'll have been there for 25 years in March. I didn't have to climb the ladder, either. Instead of starting out taking high-school football scores on the phone, I was covering Michael Jordan vs. the Bad Boy Pistons before I was old enough to drink.

Over the years, my sportswriting friends began to appreciate my nerdish ways. Before every statistic in the world was available on internet reference sites, I would be the one going through microfiche at the library to figure out if Charlie Hough and Carlton Fisk were the oldest pitcher-catcher combination in baseball history. I'd share the results with them, and they would happily use it.

But if they found out I was going to ConFusion? Then it was more of the same old "Isn't that one of those things where people dress up in costumes and act like geeks? That's just weird."



Side Story - Seriously, this Scalzi thing is insane. I remember meeting him at ConFusion when he was just a nice guy with a cool blog and a new book. This summer at Detcon1, we were sharing a hotel with NetRoots – a national conference with speakers like Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren – and their attendees lost their minds when they discovered that Scalzi was in their hotel. You would have thought One Direction had shown up.

When I got to the con, it wasn't much better. I quite often have to miss Friday or Saturday evenings because of work commitments, and I'm never around on Sundays. No matter when it is, there were people who were incredulous that I'd be leaving a SF convention to attend a sporting event. Even when I explained it was my job, they'd still roll their eyes and give me pitying looks.

The good news is that, over the last 10-15 years, this has changed for the better on both ends. What surprises me is the acceptance rate has gone up much higher in one direction, and it is the one that I would have never expected.

Don't get me wrong -- I can go to a con these days and have long discussions about the Red Wings and Lions, and it was fun to see how many people were excited to go to the Tigers game during Detcon1. I also got to take part in a "Sports and Science Fiction" panel, something I could have never imagined at my first con.

But it is still socially acceptable in fandom to mock "sportsball games" and people are comfortable asking me if I really have to sit through the entire game. When I say yes, they tell me "that really sucks." I don't really hear coders or security gurus getting much of that.

At the same time, it is a whole new world at sporting events. If science fiction gets mentioned, the discussion that ensues is generally about the latest events in Middle Earth or a debate on why Captain America never picked up a phone and called Tony Stark for help with all those heli-carriers. No one misses an episode of Game of Thrones, and the Star Wars teaser-trailer got more views on press row than LeBron James' latest masterpiece.

Every player has an iPad -- the teams provide them so that the players can review game tapes -- but when they are using them for entertainment, it is more often a Marvel movie or an episode of The Walking Dead that has their attention, not the latest big-budget action movie.

And if I mention that I'm going to a con? People will ask about the Guests of Honor and the panels and, of course, the biggest question in SF/F these days -- "Is John Scalzi going to be there?"

I never dreamed that, in 2014, the sports community would have endorsed science fiction and fantasy to the point where it is quite possibly the most popular storytelling genre in their culture.

Now it would just be nice if the SF/F community learned to be as tolerant of sports. We won the culture war. We should probably stop fighting.





A TALE OF TWO FANDOMS BY JERRY GILIO



I live in two worlds. One is considered as normal and all-American as hot dogs and apple pie. The other is often viewed as odd and may be openly mocked. I am a sports fan and a science fiction fan. The strange thing is that these two worlds have more in common than not.

As I compared my behavior as a science fiction fan to my behavior as a sports fan an uncanny similarity emerged. Yet that similar behavior is received very differently by the people around me. I can only attribute the differences to how fandom is perceived, compared to its reality.

One of the most common questions I get when I tell people that my wife and I are going to a science fiction convention is, "Do you dress up?" They ask as though they are trying to get me to admit to some weird, dark fetish. However, the same people will proudly show me a selfie from a Cubs game where they're wearing their vintage 1908 Cubs cap and jersey. It's true that you'd get a lot fewer stares walking down Michigan Avenue in the Cubs uniform than dressed as your favorite Tolkien character, but at its core it's the same behavior. You're dressing up as someone that you admire. (I managed to merge my two loves nicely with the purchase of a Starfleet Command hockey sweater.)

What's the difference between arguing if Superman could beat up the Hulk and if Rocky Marciano could beat up Muhammad Ali? Debates of these imaginary matchups can lead to confrontations as intense as the final courtroom scene in "A Few Good Men".

Trivia is the coin of the realm for both groups. Baseball fans show a devotion to their studies that would fill most medieval monks with envy. If you doubt this, ask a baseball fan who was the last player to hit .400, what team he played for, and the year he did it. It's not that different from being able to name the highest speed achieved by the U.S.S. Enterprise in original Trek and the episode in which it happened. Yet, one wins you a drink at the neighborhood tavern. The other gets you pantsed.

Each fandom has internal rivalries so intense they'd cause the Hatfields and McCoys to declare, "Y'all need to simmer down a mite." White Sox fans know they'll sweep the Crosstown Classic. *Star Wars* fans know that Starfleet could be defeated by about two dozen Jedi masters.

Opinions are in no short supply for either group. Many conversations start with the words, "Let me tell you what's wrong with the Bears this season." However, just as many start with, "Let me tell you what's wrong with Doctor Who this season."

“All hockey players are bilingual. They know English and profanity.”

Gordie Howe

I've journeyed far to attend both conventions and sporting events. Yet the reaction of my friends and family was very different. When I told them I was going to Toronto to see the Maple Leafs play the Blackhawks at the Air Canada Center, I received an envious, "Cool!" When I told them I was going to Glasgow for the World Science Fiction Convention, I got a puzzled, "Really?"

I've waited in line to be photographed with Ray Bradbury and with the Stanley Cup. Guess which photo more people want to see. Yet I treasure them both equally.

But there is hope. Over the years the gap has closed. Co-workers will ask, "Are you going to that C2E2 thing?" without a hint of judgment. Water cooler talk now includes who died on the latest episode of *Game of Thrones* or *The Walking Dead*. And I've spent hours at a con discussing what the Blackhawks need to do to improve their power play.

In the end, the same passion drives us to be fans. There's a sense of camaraderie, of belonging to a larger community. There are things we know that set us apart from masses, which make us feel superior. It's something I share with my sports friends and with my fannish friends alike. And my fannish sports friends are a treasure to be prized, like a Mickey Mantle rookie card or a first edition of *The Martian Chronicles*.





DRAGONS, IRONSIDES, SCANDALS, DARK HORSES, SPARTANS, CONVICTS AND WARRIORS BY JAMES BACON



Men run out of the changing rooms from underneath what is quite a nice stadium, but they run away from the structure; some are lithe, fiery, sprinty, and some lumber out like tanks, heavily and slowly pounding the ground, churning the grass as soon as they get to it. These are rugby players, and they are here to do battle.

I have trekked northwards from London on a pleasant day to Manchester. I was rather taken aback at a recent Arisia when a pal, Marlin, was wearing a Rugby Shirt. I was surprised, because he is a yank. An American. And you know, Rugby is the thing that American Football has mutated from, only it's the really good sport, full of action, has one break in the middle, no time outs and is played by Ireland and by the Irish provinces, and is something I watch.

It is a great game. Fast, full of passion, violent on the pitch, but gentlemanly generally, and I have watched it for many years now. My ex-wife Simoné VanZyl was a huge fan, so when we were in South Africa we went to a number of Natal Sharks games, and they were great fun; it became mandatory to watch all South African games and I loved it. We watched South Africa lose to Ireland in Lansdowne Road in Dublin and it was a fabulous game.

The brothers and the Da also like Rugby, and my grandmother was a big fan of Ollie Campbell, an Irish Kicker with considerable skill. So I understand the rules, and even practised with a team from Finglas. I know, anyone from home would not imagine it, but Unidare RFC, which were born from a factory in Finglas and at the time played on the Malahide clubs pitch, would practice and I went along, as did the brother. Now Unidare have a pitch at Ballymun. For those of you unaware, these are the Dublin neighbourhoods that one would not at all associate with rugby in Ireland, no, nay never, not at all, and yet there they are. Sort of like Englewood or somewhere in Southy, but then these areas may have clubs or associations that I do not know about. I have worked in Finglas and Ballymun, and I liked it, and Englewood seemed much nicer than I was lead to believe, and all of Boston is glorious, so Rugby can be a bit odd like that.

The intersection between rugby and science fiction would normally be at Picocon, the Science fiction convention run by the SF Society at Imperial College in Kensington, London, where you would expect to find rugby.

The convention is usually on in February, and thus occurs during the Six Nations rugby tournament. This has worked out extraordinarily well, for Ireland has been playing on a number of occasions.

“Rugby and American football have the same ancestor - cave men fighting over the best bits of a deer one of them killed. Only difference is rugby players managed to evolve out of the caveman mindset.”
Chris Garcia



The convention is held in Beit Quad, a quaint sort of ancient college square with grey buildings towering up, but creating a place of quiet, and one side has the Student Union bar, and some rooms, and here Picocon with a dealers room and programme occurs. I have gone as much as I can, but normally am intent on spending all my time in the bar, drinking. The beer is cheap.

Last time I turned up, I had some cider cans in the bag, and was surprised to find the bar was open quite early at about 10.30am. Disappointingly they were not serving yet, so I went outside and cracked open a can and offered them about. The manager then leaned out the window and said, we could drink them inside while we waited for the bar to open. This was rather hospitable, and it is that sort of place.

There would be a number of matches on a Saturday, so I would get comfortable, work out what time things were to start at, and ensure that I had confirmed which TV screens would be lowered and then be ready.

The Bar would never be that full, but a compliment of SF fans would come in and go out. Ostensibly I had a position of responsibility at these conventions, either in charge of promoting London as a Worldcon bid, or as a part of an actual Worldcon, but I had ensured delegation or abnegation had occurred so as to avoid any commitment beyond the one with booze.

There are a number of other fans, Billy Stirling especially who would have an equal interest, and so the matches would come on, and if it was France against Italy, it might be on in the corner, for we knew which matches we wanted. Then Stef Lancaster (my best mate) and during married times Simone (my wife) would turn up. In order to ensure a correct level of support, spare Irish jerseys would be on hand, nice cheap ones, like you would expect from proper Irish fans, and we would put Stef in one.

Who would then have the most incredible Irish accent that killed people. His best and most believable line, would be 'Heh!?' in an Irish lilt, with a strength unusual to him, and he would repeat it, and people would just assume he was Irish. Including Irish people.

So it would be fabulous when Ireland were playing England.

Now this can go BADLY and go really well. For instance there have been a couple of bad times, like when I trekked across to Twickenham with Stuart 'Jebbo' Jebson, and was later joined by Stef, and about 27 others, including Emma King, and people from work, to watch Ireland get beaten.

This was a grim occasion, and it was the 3rd match of the day, starting at 7pm or something dreadful and we were there from 10.30am. I was one of the few in an Irish jersey, I should have brought more; I have done this elsewhere as mentioned, and even at Capricorn in Chicago, for instance, where Ireland also lost. Crikey another shocking and upsetting thing, but I was pleased that Sondra wore the Jersey at Cap so I was not alone there, unlike the loneliness of loss in the heartland of British Rugby, Twickenham. The pub of choice was the William Web Ellis, named after the originator of the game, a cheap bar, and to me, hostile, but it was a great day.

Back in Imperial, we got set up, we had booze from the Bar and emergency supplies in the bag, and the wife was in terrific form, and a crowd of us had a big table with a perfect view. The match was not due to start for about 20 minutes and the bar was really filling up, and then, like a storm troop descending, the College Rugby team showed up, and they were shocked to find all these people in the wrong jerseys (even Billy has a Scotland jersey, Simone my wife in a South African one) and generally not looking at all like we were meant to be there. Invaders.

There was much hilarity as they struggled with discontent and unhappiness to find somewhere to sit, eventually opening the sun doors to the quad and having to bring in furniture reinforcements of plastic chairs and the like. I smiled. Three – Nil, already.

There were a few Irish Students here at Imperial, I could spot them, apart from the genetic recognition ingrained into us, and the fact that they thought Stef was definitely Irish, they were obviously proper fans - a girl in the Irish football Jersey and a couple in Gaelic Athletic Association County Club jerseys. We made space for them.

Once the match started, I could see it was going to be close. The bar had filled to capacity, the Imperial Rugby lads all supporting the home team, there were five long tables and at least one was our table of misfits and one was all as one might say, and there was mild banter, in the sense that commentary was added.

Things were getting heated, Ireland could see this was a chance for them, and a foul was called against England, a huge protest erupted from the main Imperial table, one fella shouting foul, before I could look, I heard a woman shouting 'Use it or Lose it' the wife was up on her feet finger pointing and determined, and followed up with a 'know the rules, it's a penalty' and there was no response.

We had won and then we did.



“Cricket is a game for gentlemen played by gentlemen,
Football is a game for gentlemen played by hooligans,
Rugby Union is a game for hooligans played by gentlemen,
And Rugby League is a game for hooligans played by hooligans.”

Attributed to
George Bernard Shaw

Yeah, so back to Manchester.

Marlin played for the Boston Ironsides, and I have to admit I was quite taken with his jersey; it is a nice blue with some choice red and white. He decided to take it up and I was super pleased. As we chatted about Rugby at Arisia in 2012, he said, he was coming to England for a tournament, and I had said I would pop by, if it was suitable.

I had met Marlin in 2009 at the Montreal Worldcon, which was a great Worldcon for me, I made a lot of new pals there. He was hanging out with Paula, and other friends, and we have met at the last three Arisias as Boston is his home town.

Marlin got in touch, the matches would take place at Broughton Park RUFC, a large area of practice rugby pitches surrounding a modest stadium, as would be expected for a club that's first team plays in the North West One, a sixth level league in the English league system. Yet it is also one of England's oldest clubs, having been formed in 1882.

Over thirty clubs from fifteen countries were here to compete in the Bingham Cup.

The Mark Kendall Bingham Memorial Tournament, or Bingham Cup, is the World Championship of Gay and Inclusive Rugby, and is a twenty first century competition. The New York Gotham Knights were the holders of the cup, having won in 2008.

Mark Bingham had perished on the 11th of September 2001. He was on board United Flight 93, which came down in Pennsylvania. A 6' 4" athlete of great ability, he was born in 1970, grew up in Miami and Southern California, before moving to San Jose in 1983. He was the Captain of Los Gatos High School, in Santa Clara County, for two years, and went on to play at Berkeley being part of two national championship Rugby Teams. He came out as gay at the age of 21.

In 2000 the founder of San Francisco Fog, Derrick Mickle, had discussed his frustration with the lack of a place to play rugby that accepted gay players with Mark Bingham, and Bingham was there from the onset, playing in Fog's first matches in 2001. There were other teams, and they formed IGRAB, the International Gay Rugby Association and Board, as the umbrella organization for the world's gay rugby clubs, and the first invitational IGRAB international invitational tournament occurred in Washington under the auspices of the Washington Renegades.

“Gay men weren't always wallflowers waiting on the sideline. We have the opportunity to let these other athletes know that gay men were around all along — on their little league teams, in their classes, being their friends.”

Mark Bingham



Some links.

<http://www.binghamcup.com>

<http://chicagodragons.org>

<http://www.SFFOG.Org>

<http://ewrffc.ie>



Mark Bingham had a PR company, and had opened a second office in New York City and had started chatting with his friend Scott Glaessgen about setting up a New York team, the Gotham Knights.

Bingham was on United 93 on the 11th of September. Many of the passengers were able to make phone calls, and had heard what was happening to other flights. Their plane was hijacked, and they made a decision.

Bingham, a Rugby Player, is thought to have joined others, who had informed various people by phone that an effort to retake the plane was planned. Todd Beamer, basketball player, Tom Burnett, college quarterback, Jeremy Glick, Rugby player and judo college champion, Sandra Bradshaw, a brown belt in Karate, and Flight Attendant Sandra Bradshaw, all made calls.

The flight was crashed by the hijackers as the cockpit was stormed and struggles recorded.

The next year, under the auspices of IGRAB the Bingham Cup was initiated and was hosted by San Francisco Fog. Mark Bingham's mother Alice Hoagland has been a massive advocate for things that mattered to Mark. The Fog play in the middle of the bay, in San Francisco, on Treasure Island.

The Bingham Cup was being held here at Manchester and so, I came along to cheer on Marlin. Initially I arrived after his first game has started, but I watched him play, and crikey it was a tough game. Afterwards, I caught up with him as he waited to go into the massage tent, an area that resembled a field hospital, for the beaten and battered, as he was already hurting, but pleased.

While I left him to it, I quaffed down some ciders, being served from an outdoor vendor, and some good food. I watched and cheered on the Emerald Warriors, as they thrashed an American team. There were about 100 Irish supporters there, and they obviously knew one another, but they were welcoming when they heard my accent, and urging mauls to 'Heave' and so forth.

After that I watched the Chicago Dragons, a great bunch of lads, who were utterly taken aback by my knowledge of their city. I spent a decent amount of time chatting with them, superb fellows, and very friendly. They play at Lincoln Park.

Later, once Marlin had been mended as much as humanly possible, he sorta achingly caught up with me and we chatted some and hung out, but too soon it was time for me to go, they were being bussed to their City centre hotels, and some entertainments were planned, and while I was thinking it might not be a bad thing to join him, the last train south was not all that late, and the day had been better than good, so we had a final quick pint and we departed.

Science Fiction and Rugby, seriously, they brought things together, and I love them both and as if both interests do not have enough parallels, Chicago Dragons lost in their bid to host the 2016 Bingham cup to Nashville Grizzlies. <http://igrab.net/bc2016.htm>

On the San Francisco Fog is this piece:

The team received the following email from Mark a few weeks before his death. He wrote it when he learned that the Fog had been accepted as a permanent member of the Northern California Rugby Football Union:

Wow! What an inspiring email. This is a huge step forward for gay rugby.

When I started playing rugby at the age of 16, I always thought that my interest in other guys would be an anathema — completely repulsive to the guys on my team — and to the people I was knocking the shit out of on the other team. I loved the game, but KNEW I would need to keep my sexuality a secret forever. I feared total rejection.

As we worked and sweated and ran and talked together this year, I finally felt accepted as a gay man and a rugby player. My two irreconcilable worlds came together.

Now we've been accepted into the union and the road is going to get harder. We need to work harder. We need to get better. We have the chance to be role models for other gay folks who wanted to play sports, but never felt good enough or strong enough. More importantly, we have the chance to show the other teams in the league that we are as good as they are. Good rugby players. Good partiers. Good sports. Good men.

Gay men weren't always wallflowers waiting on the sideline. We have the opportunity to let these other athletes know that gay men were around all along — on their little league teams, in their classes, being their friends.

This is a great opportunity to change a lot of people's minds, and to reach a group that might never have had to know or hear about gay people.

Let's go make some new friends...and win a few games.

Congratulations, my brothers in rugby ~Mb



STORY TIME BY RUTH LEIBIG



There is the story of the young guy playing with veterans, making a ton of mistakes, but through that experience ends up being the hero. There is the story of the fellow who works for years to achieve his dream, almost gives up, but tries one more time and achieves greatness. There is the story of the older guy who can't quite keep up any more and has to figure out how to stop living his dream and find another. There is the new guy that shows up and annoys the crap out of everyone. Sound familiar?

I was trying to think what appeals to me about both SF/fantasy and baseball. It is the stories.

I am drawn to stories where people overcome great obstacles to achieve their goals. This preference generally leads me to space opera and epic fantasy. I am in the hands of the author to lead me on an amazing journey. If my heroes in a story can achieve their goals, maybe I can too. For my favorite TV (*Doctor Who* at the moment) I can't wait to see what the writers and actors have in store each season. In baseball, every spring there is an open book. What obstacles will need to be overcome? Is this the year for my team? Will my favorite player do well? What new guys will be added to the team that I will love? The stories in baseball are a combination of the team, the people who put the team together, and the baseball writers/broadcasters.

Another common aspect is the oral story telling tradition. The bards traveling around kept the stories alive for centuries. In baseball, because of the pace of the game, there is plenty of time during the game to tell stories about the current players as well as the players past. It is an extra bonus if you listen to a good radio broadcaster during a rain delay when the stories flow like the rain.

I enjoy reading the myths and folklore that inform a lot of fantasy. How were people long ago seeing their world and what stories helped them learn about themselves and keep them going in tough times? What ideas were inspiring them? In baseball, the stories go back 150 years. You hear baseball reporters still writing about Christy Mathewson (a famous pitcher for the Giants during the early 1900s) or make a joke about the Cubs still paying several managers right now, including Frank Chance (the manager when they last won the World Series in 1908).

I love bonding with other SF fans about baseball. My team is the San Francisco Giants, but since what I am interested in is the stories, if there is a player on another team that has a great story, I will read about them. This means that when I go to conventions and find a fan interested in baseball, I can usually talk to them about some of the players on their team and get to listen to stories about players on other teams that I may not know.

For me, it is all about the stories.



BOXING + WRESTLING = / ≠ MMA BY CHRIS GARCIA

Sports have gotten more and more complex as time has the centuries have flowed. If you look at what baseball, cricket, or any other bat and ball game have become, you'll see it. They are dozens of rules, some next level arcane, and they rely on a thorough interconnectivity that you seldom find in nature. There are still individual sports, and while some have their own complexity issues (Figure Skating, for example), but in recent years, we've seen a return to simplicity... sort of. Mixed Martial Arts wasn't invented in the 1990s, but that's when it blossomed, got the name, and started to expand. By the mid-2000s, it was HUGE, and today is a big deal in the world of sports. The funny thing is, what it grew out of wasn't Judo, Tae Kwon Do or Greco-Roman wrestling. It grew from Boxing and Pro Wrestling.

In the 1960s and 70s, there was an explosion in Boxing. His name was Muhammad Ali (well, at first it was Cassius Clay, but let's not muddy the waters...) and he made Boxing into a giant sport. In the late 19th and early 20th century, boxing was a big deal, but far more on the local level. The big fights in the early days would draw tens of thousands of people, and when television came about in the 1950s, it was one of the most popular programs, largely because it was cheap to produce. It wasn't until Ali that televised boxing had a major superstar who understood what you could do with television as a platform. Ali elevated boxing's profile so that on an international level it was as big as it had been on the local level in the early days.

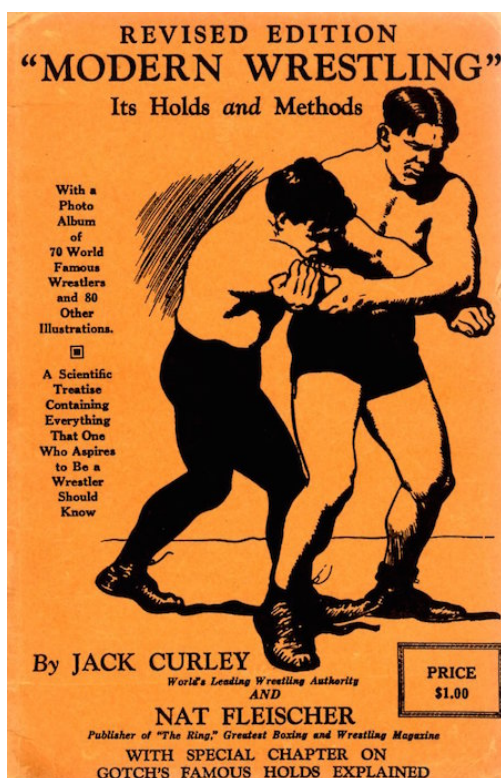
And what Ali knew, he learned from wrestling.

You see, when Ali was a kid, there was wrestling all over the place. In the late 40s and early 1950s, most of the major TV networks had wrestling on prime time, not to mention most areas had a local promotion that would run a show as well. Chicago was the epicenter for DuMont's wrestling shows, and the big star out there was Gorgeous George. He was flamboyant and could talk like nobody's business. He was hugely charismatic and his ring entrance was one of the best the world had ever seen. Now, Ali grew up in Louisville, where the big star at the time was a fellow named Freddy Blassie. Blassie was a good wrestler, but he was one of the all-time great talkers. He was big in the South in the 1940s and 50s, and then came out to Hollywood where he became the star of Wrestling at the Olympic, which was syndicated around the country on the Spanish Independent Network. He would have been the local guy that Ali would have seen, though he always said that Gorgeous George was the man he emulated. Could be both, I imagine.



"We all fight in different arenas in our life. And I think that's what draws so many people to fighting. It's because it's the actual physical manifestation of the way they feel inside. To me, to live is to fight"

Rashad Evans



Ali's hype style for his fights was very much like Freddy Blassie's. It was over-the-top, braggadocious, and just plain forceful. He was loud, and then he'd get in the ring and back it up. The force of personality made him a giant international star, and that raised the bar for all fighting sports. By the mid-1970s, boxing was giant, drawing big crowds to closed-circuit events where hundreds of people would go to see the fight in movie theatres. The advent of pay-per-view would kill that off, but the atmosphere for big fights at a CC event was almost as lively as being in the arena where the fight was taking place.

In Japan, pro wrestling has been huge for decades. In the 1950s, Japan's biggest star was Rikidozan. Not just biggest wrestling star, but biggest star. Only El Santo in Mexico was a bigger name in the entirety of the dominant culture than Rikidozan was in Japan in the 1950s. He was huge, ten times bigger than Hulk Hogan was in his prime, and bigger than Gorgeous George. When he'd have a match, the streets would empty. He took on all comers, though the big matches were always Rikidozan versus some American or English wrestler, and Rikidozan would always (well, almost always...) triumph. He was also connected to gangsters, which would eventually lead to his murder. Rikidozan established wrestling forever in Japan, and he had two prime workers that he mentored – Shohei 'Giant' Baba (a former baseball pitcher) and Kanji Inoki, a tall, lantern-jawed Japanese kid from Brazil who took the ring name Antonio Inoki. Rikidozan discovered him on a tour of Brazil and brought him back to Japan. Inoki and Baba became big stars, and top rivals, and after about a decade, they split from the Japan Wrestling Association and each formed their own wrestling promotion – Baba's All Japan Pro Wrestling and Inoki's New Japan.

Both were HUGE and changed the way wrestling was done around the world.

Inoki had an idea. He wanted to be the biggest wrestling star in history. Now, Japan has a big tradition of fighting sports. In addition to sumo, judo, karate, and tae kwon do tournaments got serious coverage on Japanese TV. Some of the bigger names in sumo went into pro wrestling, and when they did, they worked as if they were regular pro wrestlers. Inoki had an idea. He would make himself into the biggest fighting star there was by fighting stars in other disciplines. He started to put together cards where he would headline facing fighters who were names in Japan. Inoki had studied hooking, a system of wrestling that is designed to incapacitate an opponent, under the legendary Karl Gotch. He was supposed a decent practitioner of the art, but he never really had to use that skill because he would book himself to win the matches against the stars he faced. He wouldn't always win, sometimes there would be a draw, but he was HUGE for beating big names.

And the biggest name was Muhammad Ali.

As early as 1975, Inoki was trying to get Ali to agree to a fight. The idea was that Inoki would fight him, beat him, and then become a huge star in America as the guy who beat Muhammad Ali! Simple, right? A huge payday was agreed to, and Inoki was going to win it all. Ali showed up at a wrestling show and faced off with one of America's biggest stars – Gorilla Monsoon, who gave him an airplane spin saying that Ali 'didn't know a wristlock from a wristwatch.' Inoki came over to the US and had some matches around the country with Freddy Blassie as his hypeman. He was great at it too! The fight day came and Ali was unhappy. The 6 million dollar payday wasn't enough as he saw that his name would be diminished if he lost to a pro wrestler. Ali said "This ain't going to be no Pearl Harbor" as he walked through the airport. His people were still trying to hammer out a finish to the fight, and eventually an agreement was made – there would be no predetermined ending, but the rules they would use would be heavily in Ali's favor as Inoki wouldn't use submissions or slams. This was bad.

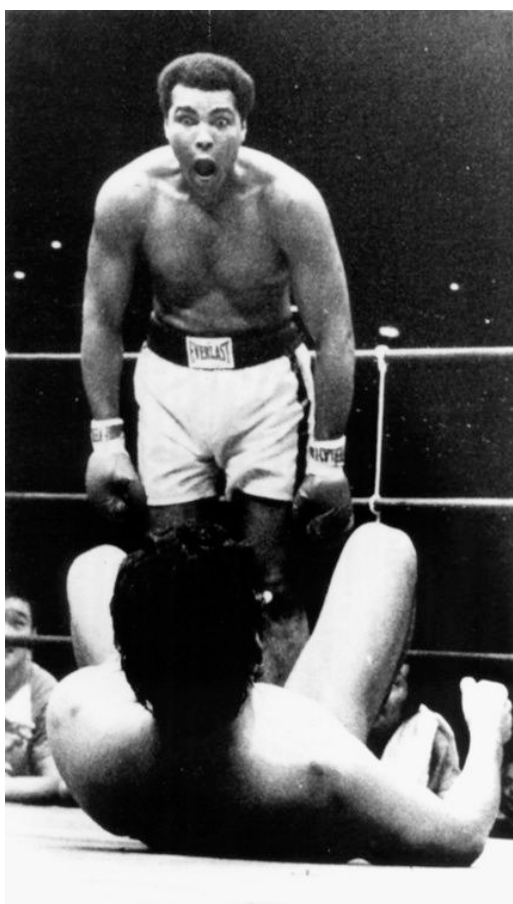
The fight was worse.

Basically, it went 15 rounds, and the only damage done was Inoki kicking at Ali's legs. There are those who say that Ali took so much damage from the kicks that it shortened his career, but who knows? The fight drew decent money, was a huge deal in Japan, and though it was a draw, Inoki was seen as the 'winner' in Japanese eyes. He had taken on the best, and he didn't lose. The US had agreed to put the fight on Closed Circuit, but alas, it didn't sell many tickets. Americans didn't care about Inoki, and as much as they loved Ali, it just didn't sell tickets. In the Northeast, the WWWF (now WWE) had a huge show at Shea Stadium where they showed the Ali fight along with live wrestling matches. This show drew huge, not because of Ali vs. Inoki, but because of Stan Hansen vs. Bruno Sanmartino had become the hottest pro wrestling program in years.

This idea of seeing who the best fighter in the world was didn't die with Ali vs. Inoki, and Inoki still did fights like that up through the early 1990s. When the Cold War ended, he got Russian champions to come over and fight him. He even did some mixed fights in Brazil. Brazil had a tradition of jiu jitsu. A Japanese Judoka named Maeda gave a demonstration in Rio in 1917 and Carlos Gracie studied under him, developing what we now think of as modern jiu jitsu. Gracie taught his sons, and then dynasty was developed. Helio Gracie became a giant name battling judoka from Ja-

“The fight is always over before either man steps in the ring. The fight is against the training, and only one man can win.”

Lou Duva



pan in huge matches in Brazil. In 1993, Rorion Gracie promoted a new concept, the Ultimate Fighting Championship, and his brother Royce was the star. They started by doing tournaments to determine who was the best fighter from various disciplines, and Gracie won three of the first four. These were brutal, but not quite the human cockfights that the media called them. There were rules, not many, but they existed. No biting, eye gouging, fish hooking, etc, but there were also no rounds or time limits. You fought until someone won. That was the way of the early UFC.

It was a popular, though underground, event until the second generation of fighters started to retire following losses to the stars who would become the third generation. These third generation UFC fighters all pretty much came of age in the 1990s, when Pro Wrestling was on its peak run with The Rock, Stone Cold Steve Austin and the NWO. They understood how to promote a fight with their interviews, and the Ultimate Fighter TV show was built to tell longer, on-going storylines. That concept helped launch MMA beyond anything wrestling had ever done. UFC is now the second biggest pay-per-view draw behind only boxing. Japan took to MMA in a big way, and the annual New Year's Eve shows featuring MMA fights made gigantic names of various fighters, and no one as big as Bob Sapp, brother of American football player Warren Sapp, and an incredibly charismatic kickboxer who drew major ratings.

As often happens, the rise of MMA due to the influence of pro wrestling led to changes in pro wrestling. Again, starting in Japan, there was a concept called Strong Style that took the stiff punches and kicks of MMA and added wrestling's scripting and storylines. These promotions also became huge, and sometimes they even put on legitimate matches. The strong style revolution led to changes in traditional pro wrestling, like every match having a clear winner and loser, punches and kicks being allowed to land a little tighter than the traditional pulled blow, and submissions being a legitimate treat. This first happened in Japan, especially with All Japan wrestling's heavyweights and New Japan's light-heavyweights who put on the best shows the world has ever seen in the late 1990s. This influence led American wrestling, which had been stylistically behind Japan for a couple of decades, to up its game, and importing some of Japan's biggest stars, changed the way matches were worked. Stiffer shots, better work, cleaner finishes.

MMA is heavily regulated now, so much so that those who loved the purity of it in the early days hardly recognize it. That did make it easier to bring to a wider audience, but there was something lost. Wrestling is still around, not as big culturally as it once was, but still there, still drawing thousands to arenas and millions to the television shows. Boxing still draws PPV numbers for the biggest heavyweight fights, but not too well for anything else unless there's a compelling storyline behind a specific match, and maybe that's the point; we don't really care about competition, we care about stories.



DREAMING OF MAD DOG BY #3



I had a dream. You know one of those dreams that sticks with you. The improbable becomes possible, and you wake up with a smile on your face. So I had this dream:

I come to my senses surrounded by a crowd. First off I look down; I am clothed. Good start. I then take in the surrounding crowd. I am not with anyone. So where am I? There is an electric and active crowd. Holy crap I am at a WWE event. Odd, I know it as WWE but I also remember it as the WWF. So, what am I doing at this event? I never went to one when I used to watch them on USA and TNT.

It looks like they are getting ready for one of those tribute events. They are wheeling someone down the ramp. Ah, a tribute to some former star. HOLY CRAP! That is Mike Walsh, what is he doing here? I didn't know he was a wrestler. The crowd seems to love him.

They slowly wheel him down to the ring. Several faceless stars lift the chair into the ring as the crowd continues to cheer. I am still amazed that Mike Walsh, book seller, is a former wrestling star.

The scene jumps and someone is talking about Mike. Is that, could it be? What the Heck! Gardner Dozier. Now this is strange. He seems to be saying all the right things. The crowd is eating it up. Mike sits lifelessly in the chair, maybe not all there. Gardner continues his speech. I don't know what he is saying, but it seems to be what the fans want. Maybe they were big rivals in the old days. Huh? Gardner and Walsh wrestlers, I guess the literary world is more interesting than I thought.

Gardner continues his speech glorying in the crowd's approval. Mike stirs. He stands. Gardner doesn't see it. The crowd goes wild. Mike picks up his wheel chair and throws it at Gardner. The fight is on; two old stars going at it one more time.

I awake, laughing at the insanity of my dream. I know at some level that they were fighting over a book. I hope that some night I may return in a dream to the glory days of Mike "Mad Dog" Walsh, hero of the ring.



AN AMERICAN FAN IN AUSTRALIA BY JANICE GELB

When I left the Bay Area to move to Australia nine (!) years ago, the San Francisco Giants had not won a World Series since 1954, and while I lived there they lost the 1989 "earthquake" Series to the Oakland A's and then in 2002 they lost to the Anaheim Angels in a heartbreaker. (BTW, I was at the earthquake game.) This year, the Giants won their third Series in five years... and I was in Melbourne, watching the playoff and Series games on ESPN International, usually starting incongruously at 10 in the morning. Although I know the Giants have had a string of recent success, subconsciously because of their record when I left I still am nervous each time they're in the playoffs.

This was a special chance to watch one of my US sporting teams live. Although our cable plan includes several Fox Sports channels and two ESPN channels, they carry international sports and not just US ones. We only get marquee games like baseball games of the week, NFL games of the week, Monday Night Football, and one or two college football games a week. It's very funky to watch an American sports event on international cable TV: instead of commercials, you see promos for upcoming matches for various international soccer leagues, or sports like cricket or darts. And even stranger, the electronically generated backstop ads during baseball games are often in Japanese, the primary overseas audience for the sport!

The ultimate marquee game, the Super Bowl, is easy to catch because it is broadcast on both cable and a local broadcast channel. Listening to the local announcers is often really amusing. (I actually laughed out loud one year when their special guest during halftime was an Australian Rules player who had signed as a kicker for an NFL team for a couple of years, and they asked him whether the NFL players all hung out together. As I told an American friend, "How would he know? No one talks to the kicker!")

For the Super Bowl, the first couple of years after I moved here I went to a group venue hosting a party - one year a pub, the next year a TGI Friday's - but not knowing anyone there still made it kind of lonely. However, in 2009 I was talking to an observant Or-



"Champions keep
playing until they
get it right."
Billie Jean King

thodox Jewish friend here who is originally from New Orleans (and whose Australian husband is a local fringe science fiction fan) and she was excited about her Saints winning their way through the NFL playoffs. I promised her that if they made it into the Super Bowl, she could come watch the game on our ginormous TV. Sure enough, they succeeded, and I hosted a Super Bowl party for her and some other ex-pat American friends with decorations in Saints colors. She brought red beans and rice, traditionally eaten in New Orleans on Mondays (although not usually kosher versions :->). After they won, I also let her use my Skype account to call her very excited relatives back home.

(Before I go further, I should probably add that I don't follow just American sports: I'm a paid member of a local Australian Rules football team, the St Kilda Saints, and I'm one of the few Americans here who like and follow cricket!)

Catching my US teams in games during the regular season is often difficult. That's why one of the only things that reconciles me to the usual winter weather when we go to Smofcon in early December is that when it occurs in the US, we usually come for Thanksgiving as well, and I can happily overdose on college and pro football. I went to the University of Florida and continue to follow the Gators, and one of our big rivalry games (against Florida State, where my twin brother went to school) occurs over Thanksgiving weekend. If the Gators are having a good year (unlike this season *sigh*), we're often in the SEC championship game that usually takes place over Smofcon weekend as well.

When following sports overseas, the time difference is also a factor. For big matches, I sometimes get up at 4 or 5 in the morning. (To be honest, it's usually more a matter of looking at the clock when I'm half awake and deciding to get up rather than proactively setting an alarm.) However, the one good thing about the time difference is that for religious reasons I don't use electricity on Saturday but US Saturday college games are now on Sundays for me. I am grateful when the Gators are playing in the US late afternoon or night slot rather than the noon game. I am especially grateful when they're playing in an SEC game on CBS because my free IP spoofer is able to convince the live CBS online feed that I'm in the US and I get to watch the game!

Besides the ability to watch some matches online through live streaming video, listen to games through the streaming audio of hometown radio stations, or follow ESPN's invaluable animated live GameTracker, it's the human interaction that the Internet provides that is the most valuable aspect of all.

'Tis a lonely thing to be an American sports fan overseas. Understandably, crucial games during the season are a matter of indifference locally, and even for high-profile playoff or championship games, very few people even know that the event is happening, let alone care about the outcome. Although you are not subject to all the annoying hype preceding playoffs, you also don't get the buzz from that hype. Contributing to my feeling of isolation are my experiences with people wearing various US pro and college team shirts, caps, and other gear here. When I first arrived, I would make comments to people on trams or on the street if the indicated team had just won a big game or championship. However, 99% of the time they would look at me in a puzzled way and explain that they'd picked up the item while touring or that a relative had given it to them, so I soon stopped.

Being able to converse with American friends on Twitter and Facebook while a game is in progress or right after helps with the isolation. Congratulating or commiserating with friends who follow US sports teams makes me feel like I'm participating in the American national sports conversation even if I'm not physically there. (I'd like to give a special shout-out to fellow Gators fan Eve Ackerman, who is always there online to keep me company and cheer or commiserate as appropriate.) This year's World Series is a case in point.

As a wild card team, our first game was a single-game playoff against the Pittsburgh Pirates, and I expressed my sympathy to Pittsburgh SF and baseball fans Laurie and Jim Mann when the Giants won.

Next, we played the Washington Nationals, the team with the best record in the entire National League, in the NL Division Series. I got to trash-talk in a kidding way with SF and Nats fan John Pomeranz on Facebook during that series. (As an aside, you know you're getting old when the opposing team's manager is someone you used to watch play for your team.) John was gracious in defeat when the Giants won.

Throughout the baseball playoffs, I had a great time on Facebook open discussion threads started by Bay Area SF and Giants fan Lucy Huntzinger. Having online company through the all-day (6 hours 23 minutes) record-breaking 18-inning marathon in Game 2 of the NLDS was especially welcome! For once, I was glad of the time difference because unlike my friends in the US, the game ended for me at about 3:30 pm instead of after midnight. Also, given the consistent complaints about the announcing during the playoffs, I was happy for a change that I was getting the interna-

“When you’ve got something to prove, there’s nothing greater than a challenge.”

Terry Bradshaw

tional feed, which featured low-key and knowledgeable announcers Gary Thorne and Rick Sutcliffe and no overwrought commentary or inane sideline reporter interviews.

When the Giants advanced to the National League Championship Series, it was against another team with which I had a fannish connection: Boston SF fan Deb Geisler's St Louis Cardinals. Deb changed her Facebook photo to the Cardinals logo for the playoffs but she was gracious in defeat as well.

Meanwhile, a fellow wild card team, the Kansas City Royals, was sweeping through the American League playoffs with an eight-game winning streak including three straight extra-inning games. We visit Kansas City every year for their local SF convention, ConQuesT, and I have been to a couple of games at their jewel of a stadium. Last year, the convention moved to a truly dreadful hotel near a water park. (It was so bad that they successfully got out of their contract and this year we were at a great location downtown.) The only silver lining was that it was in walking distance of Kauffman Stadium and the Royals were in town so I was able to catch a game with Deb and her husband Mike Benveniste.

Many of the SF fans in KC are also baseball fans so I was exchanging supportive messages with them during their American League run. (Even without the personal factor, I usually support the underdog team anyway and the Royals hadn't won a World Series, or even appeared in the post-season, since 1985.) However, ultimately, we played them in the World Series. That meant I was busy online not only with exchanges with fellow Giants fans but exchanges with Royals fans too. As I would have expected of the Kansas City folks like Jeff Orth, Jesi Pershing, and James Murray, it was not just trash-talking but a lot of mutual respect as well.

Now, if only I could figure out a way to follow figure skating...



THREE-FOR-FIVE: MY TEAMS BY CHRIS GARCIA



Baseball is what I associate with America. Really, it's an American sport, played in a couple of other countries (Japan, The Netherlands, Cuba, etc.) and you can argue that it's not the most popular sport in America, but it has the flavor of American baked into it. Aussie Rules Football is in a very similar position to Baseball in Oz. It's hugely popular in Australia, and it is something that is identified with the country, and while it is played a few other places, it may well be the second biggest sport in Australia to Rugby, and I can never remember if it's League or Union that's big there! Baseball and Aussie Rules (or more specifically MLB and the AFL) are the sports that are most American/Australian.

My baseball team has always been The San Francisco Giants. They were arguably the most important team in the early days of the National League. They won several titles early on, but by the time I was born, well, they weren't one of the top teams. They would compete most years, winning the National League Pennant a couple of times, but mostly, they couldn't seem to win the big one. In my youth, they went to the World Series twice: 1989 (lost to the As) and 2002 (lost to the California Angels). They still had the powerful aura of being one of the most significant teams in all of baseball the entire time. They had a Superstar for 12 years. Barry Bonds, the greatest batter ever to play the game. Even when the Giants weren't exactly in the hunt, we always had Barry's accomplishments to celebrate. Those accomplishments usually helped keep the Giants in the hunt for the World Series, though, which was nice. Still, even with an All-Time Legend (and no matter what, he SHOULD be in the Hall of Fame!), the New York Giants were the last team with that name to win the World Series before the Internet Age.

Aussie Rules Football is a little bit like Rugby with more of a soccer sensibility. The pace is fast, the action rough, the drama almost over-whelming. There are a couple of New York Yankee-like teams: Collingwood Magpies and the Hawthorn Hawks in the 1970s through today, but my team was Geelong. The Geelong Cats were, in many ways, the Grand Old Team. They were kinda like the Giants, in fact. They had been one of the driving forces behind the formation of the league, they won Championships early on, but had been in a drought since the early 1960s.

Now, I started watching Aussie Rules in the late 1980s. It was on one of the International Sports Channels, I think ESPN 2, and I fell in love with it. At the time, the most awesome team was the Geelong Cats. They had a HUGE star in my favorite: Gary Ablett.



“The meek may inherit the earth - but they will never win games of football.”
Mick Malthouse

He was a kicker who led the League in goals three years in a row, was an incredibly athletic player, and off-the-field was a bit reckless. In Aussie Rules, there's a thing called a mark, which is where a player catches the ball after it's been kicked at least 5 yards forward and comes down with it. Ablett made so many incredible marks that he earned a nickname – God.

Oddly, as a born-again Christian, he had a hard time with that one.

All through the period of his peak, roughly 1989 through 1995, Geelong was in the hunt for the Premiership pretty much every year. They made the Big Game four times, losing all four times. One of those saw Ablett win the Leigh Matthews trophy, the equivalent to winning the Game MVP, in one of the AFL Grand Finals, which is even more impressive when you think that he won it playing for the losing team.

A bunch of years passed, Aussie Rules was no longer on American TV, and things just sorta floated away until I started watching again about 2006. Geelong was getting better and better, and had a familiar name on the team – Gary Ablett. Of course, it was Gary Ablett Jr. so that was a big deal. The team had a re-birth, new players came up and it was a great time. In 2007, they had a great run, and they won all but one game that season, which they lost to Port Adelaide, a team that had just started competing when I watched for the first time. They dominated the rest of the season and made it to the Grand Finals where they ended up facing... Port Adelaide. Coming in, I thought it was going to be a nail-biter, and I couldn't actually watch it, but I found Yahoo.au had a stats update version, and an audio feed. I was nailed to it, and loved every second, because Geelong DESTROYED Port Adelaide by more than 100 points, a record for a Grand Final. It was incredible!

That was followed by a season where Geelong was great, made it to the Grand Final, but they lost to Hawthorn. The next year, Geelong beat St. Kilda to win their second, and Gary Ablett, Jr. did what his father never managed: he won the highest single individual honor in the AFL: the Brownlow Medal. It was an amazing year, and that time I got to WATCH the game on the internet.

2011 saw Geelong make the Finals again, this time against the favored Collingwood Magpies. I remember reading people saying that the Pies were 20+ point favorites and that Geelong (who had lost Ablett to the first years team Gold Coast) was done as a dynasty. Geelong had a decent first half, but Collingwood was in the lead, but through sheer gutsy play, they came back in the second half and won it all.

Three Championships in 5 years. HUGE!

The Giants had lost Bonds, but had been building a new dynasty based around young pitching. They had Tim Lincecum, who won the Cy Young two years in a row, something a Giants pitcher

"There have been only two geniuses in the world. Willie Mays and Willie Shakespeare. But, darling, I think you'd better put Shakespeare first."
Actress Tallulah Bankhead

had never done. We had Matt Caine, who would throw the first Perfect game in Giants history. We brought up a young catcher named Buster Posey, and had a third baseman named Pablo Sandoval, who was pudgy like a Panda, thus earning the nickname Kung-Fu Panda. In 2010, they had a good year, and ended up in the World Series, where they faced the Texas Rangers, who were favorites to win. Of course, the Giants won it in 5 games. I was watching with Evelyn, and when the Giants made the final out, winning the Series for the first time in my lifetime, I cried. Evelyn asked what was wrong.

"It's not that anything's wrong," I said, "it's that I never thought this would happen."

She hugged me and gave me that little smile she mastered.

"I'll make you a waffle," she said, and ran into the kitchen to make me an Eggo.

Two years later, the Giants were back in it, and they were on the verge of elimination against teams that were big time favorites, with pitching that was literally being called 'Unhittable'. The Giants struggled a bit, but they made it back to the World Series, and there they faced the Detroit Tigers. In a normal year, I'd be celebrating the Tigers making it. They're a great team, a dynasty, and them winning a World Series is a reason for celebration. They had one of those 'Unhittable' pitchers in Justin Verlander. The Tigers started him in the first game. The Kung-fu Panda, I think hitting 3rd, took him deep in his first at-bat. And again in his second. As KNBR announcer and former Giants pitcher Mike Krukow would call it, Sandoval had 'Ownage' over Verlander. Panda then hit a third homer as well.

We swept them, and as bad as I felt for Helen Montgomery (who is 0-for-2 against Bay Area teams in sports contests!) as she's a giant Detroit fan, and I would love to be able to buy a World Champion Detroit Tigers t-shirt... so long as they don't beat the Giants.

Prior to the 2014, I placed a bet on the season, saying that the Giants were going to win it all. I mentioned this to a friend of mine and she asked why I would do such a thing.

"Because Geelong did it three out of five, and the Giants are the Cats of MLB."

She had no idea what I meant, but after reading this, I bet you do, and I hope you know I ended up winning that bet! The Giants won the Series with the greatest World Series pitching performance since Don Larson threw his Perfect Game. Madison Bumgarner won the Series MVP, starting, and winning, two games, finishing a third game, throwing five innings. He gave up one run in those 20 or so innings. He struck out a bunch of guys. He was almost literally 'unhittable'. He was the perfect signature for the season where the Giants didn't look like the next World Champions.

The Cats didn't win in 2013. Nor 2014. 2015 kinda looks like a re-building years. Does this mean the Giants aren't going to win the World Series in the next few years?

Well, all it takes is a line-up and a will to win. Or at last that's what I keep telling myself.

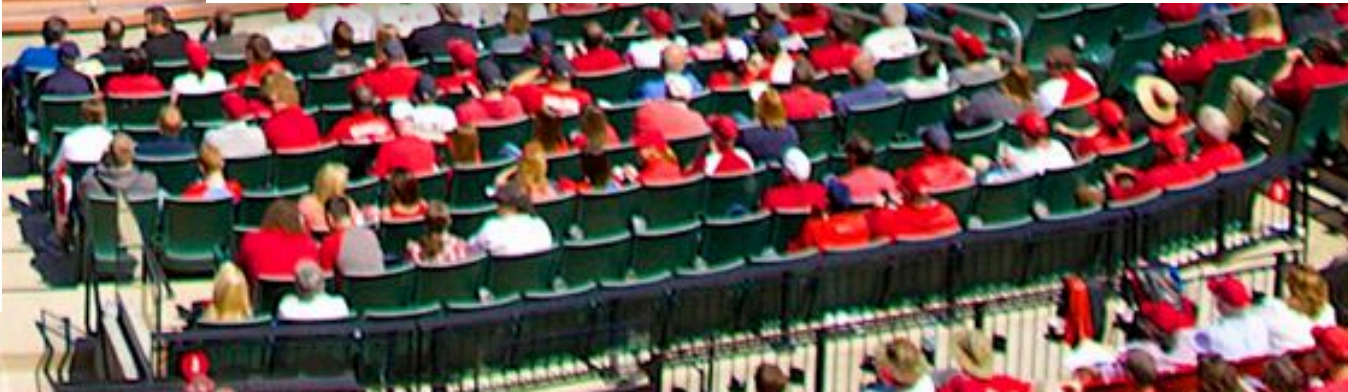




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FIRST CONTACT BY DEB GEISLER

Chairing a Worldcon is a tough job..but it's made tougher when you are convinced that some of the people who work for you as division heads are mentally deranged or just not human - and who they cheer for gives you your first clue. Pittsburgh native Jim Mann, for instance, is competent, creative, hard-working...and a Steelers fan. When a person (like me) is born and raised in Cleveland, it's nearly impossible to find redeeming qualities in Steelers fans. The Browns do not usually do very well (and when they were first in their division earlier this season, we almost all had heart attacks), but as long as they beat the Steelers twice a season, we're all pretty happy.



“You should read a book written by people who know what they’re talking about, like ‘The Chicago Cubs’ Guide to Being Mathematically Eliminated’”
Chris Garcia

Jim wasn't my biggest problem, however, since my favorite professional sport is actually baseball. And I'm not an American League person, because I got hooked on baseball living in Southern Illinois: that's St. Louis Cardinals country, that is. My husband is a Chicago Cubs fan (we have a mixed marriage), but two of the people who worked at high levels of Noreascon Four (Ben Yalow and Sharon Sbarsky) are *Mets* fans. METS?! How could *anyone* like the Mets? A fannish friend from the UK asked an American what he needed to know about baseball, and the American replied, 'The Mets are pond scum. Everything else is variable.' Mets fans are not even human, and I had *two* of them working for me.

I suspect that may have been my First Contact experience, and no one has even tried to convince me that Ben and Sharon are humans. I suspect we all know.





The **BRAVE** and the **BOLD**

12¢

MAR NO. 46



STRANGE SPORTS STORIES

CAN A BANTAM "FIVE" OF 14 YEAR-OLDS BEAT A SUPER-SIZED BASKETBALL TEAM?

Featuring **"The HOT-SHOT HOOPSTERS!"**



STRANGE SPORTS STORIES BY MIKE GROST

Originally appeared at <http://mikegrost.com/sport.htm>

Recommended Stories

The Brave and the Bold

- #46 (February-March 1963) "The Hot-Shot Hoopsters; Danger on the Martian Links"
- #48 (June-July 1963) "The Man Who Drove Through Time"
- #49 (August-September 1963) "Warriors of the Weightless World"

The above is not a complete list of Strange Sports stories. Rather, it consists of my picks of the best tales in the magazines, the ones I enjoyed reading, and recommend to others.

These best stories of the comic books are preceded by their issue number. They were edited by Julius Schwartz.

"The uglier a man's legs are, the better he plays golf - it's almost a law."

H. G. Wells

Strange Sports Stories

Strange Sports Stories was a series that ran for five issues in the tryout magazine *The Brave and the Bold* in 1963. Each issue contained two longish stories. Each tale was a science fiction story centering on sports. The tales were created by writers (Gardner Fox, John Broome), an artist (Carmine Infantino) and editor (Julius Schwartz) who frequently worked for the anthology sf comic books [Mystery in Space](#) and [Strange Adventures](#). This series should basically be regarded as an off-shoot of those two magazines. There were no continuing characters; the magazine was an anthology series. One of Schwartz's letter columns talks about developing a continuing character who would run through some of the tales, to be known as "The Sports Master", but the series did not last long enough for this to come to fruition.

Infantino used an unusual approach here. Each panel has a vertical side panel, containing narration. It also has a silhouette picture at its base, illustrating the story in the main panel. The silhouettes recall the little pictures that often decorated silent movie title cards. Infantino did something similar for his [King Faraday](#) tales (1950).

Challenge of the Headless Baseball Team (#45, December 1962-January 1963). Writer: Gardner Fox. Art: Carmine Infantino. Based on a cover by Infantino.

An Earth baseball team is challenged by an alien team who are invisible except for their baseball uniforms. The concept of large groups of invisible beings wearing identical clothes also turned up in the Fox-Infantino [Adam Strange](#) tale, "The Invisible Invaders of Rann" (*Mystery in Space* #73, February 1962). It seemed extremely sinister in both tales. It is typical of the plot ideas of the early 1960's, being spooky and atmospheric, but not at all gory. The cover also resembles Curt Swan's cover for the first [Tales of the Bizarro World](#) story, "The Shame of the Bizarro Family" (*Adventure* #285, June 1961), in that it has a human hero playing a baseball game with a lot of strange alien beings. This is the sort of catchy idea that made a good Silver Age cover. There are few things as social as a baseball game. It is deeply embedded in traditional American ideas about socializing with people. So playing a baseball game with aliens suggests that humans and aliens are meeting and interacting at a very deep level.

The story here is not as good as the cover. Fox develops one of his three cornered plots, in which there are good aliens trying to prevent a second group of militaristic aliens from performing an aggressive military action. Humans get caught up in these events as a third, independent force, coming to the aid of the good alien group, helping to defeat the militaristic aliens, and protecting their own planet in the process. The good aliens are non-militaristic, instead relying on brain power to put their ideas into practice. This is a good framework for a story, allowing for many plot complications. However, Fox used it with more skill in "Raiders of the Giant World" (*Strange Adventures* #119, August 1960).

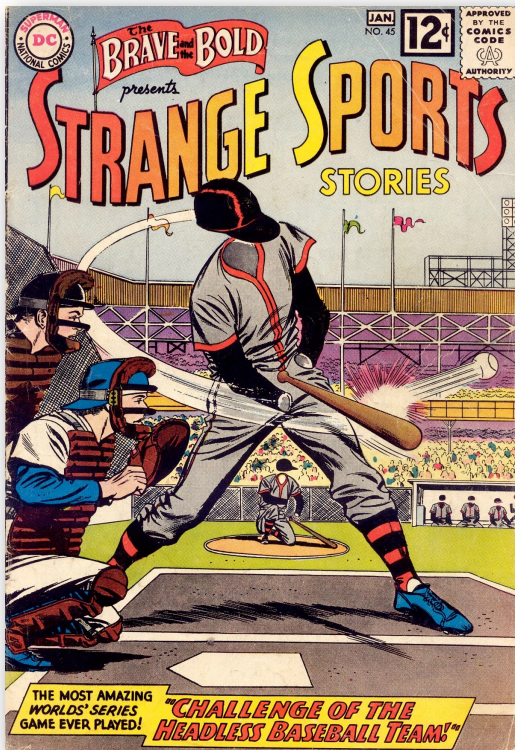
Much of this tale is taken up with endless depictions of the baseball game itself. This is pure sports action, not very well integrated with the sf plot of the story. It shows the difficulties the writers were having with the hybrid sf-sports story format of the series.

The story makes much about different levels of conscious and subconscious knowledge possessed by the human hero. These are manipulated by the aliens, sometimes putting knowledge into his head at one level, sometimes erasing it, while it persists at another, subconscious level. This view of knowledge existing at different levels seems unique to the Schwartz magazines, turning up regularly in [Green Lantern](#), as well. I do not recall it in the Weisinger edited Superman family, or in other Silver Age comic books. In the Superman stories knowledge was only on one level - either you had it or you did not. It could be erased by amnesia, a frequent plot device, but then it was permanently and totally gone.

Goliath of the Gridiron (#45, December 1962-January 1963). Writer: Gardner Fox. Art: Carmine Infantino.

A scrawny botany student develops a plant-based growth formula that turns him into the school's giant football star.

The University background of this tale, its research scientist hero who does much lab work, its plant-oriented science, the different sizes assumed by the hero's body, and the way the hero's body is transformed by his own experimentation, all link this story to Fox's series hero, the [Atom](#). The emphasis on the hero's machismo also recalls the Atom, who loved getting into fist fights with



“They say that nobody is perfect. Then they tell you practice makes perfect. I wish they'd make up their minds.”
— Wilt Chamberlain



bad guys. So does the hero's eventual attacks of exhaustion, something also faced by the Atom. However, there are differences. This protagonist is just a student, unlike the successful grown men heroes of most Schwartz comic books. Also unlike them, he lacks a steady girl friend, something which torments him. In fact, the early pages of this tale play like a romance comic book, with our hero agonizing over his inability to get a date. His main motive for wanting to be a football hero is to impress girls.

For a discussion of the football uniform in this story, see [Sports Numbers and Their Symbolism](#).

The Hot-Shot Hoopsters (#46, February-March 1963). Writer: Gardner Fox. Art: Carmine Infantino. Based on a cover by Infantino.

When a university coach temporarily loses all his basketball players due to quarantine, a group of young science geniuses aged 12 to 14 volunteer to step in, playing the game well using the laws of physics.

Like the previous issue's "Goliath of the Gridiron", this is another fantasy story about intellectuals turning into great jocks. It is much more upbeat and light hearted than the previous tale, however. These guys are taking on the game as a challenge, and to help out the coach; they have none of the desperation felt by the student in the previous tale. Their self esteem seems to be high. The story has a consistently comic tone, with Fox and Infantino relishing every aspect of their young heroes' underdog status and upset victory.

The small size and young age of the heroes makes them underdogs. Scientists and intellectuals are always heroes in Silver Age comics, and it is hard not to root for these guys to win. Fox and Infantino do not caricature their opponents, or make them out to be villains or in any way dishonest. They seem like a professional, conventional and sportsman like group of athletes. This is in contrast to modern day sports movies, which always make the Other Team out to be odious. The basketball game in the story is a sports contest, not a grudge match. Fox and Infantino would have cheapened the tone of the story if they had made the opponents here someone one could not respect.

The story emphasizes that the young heroes of the tale accomplish things by thinking. This identifies them with Fox and Infantino's hero Adam Strange, who also solves all of his problems by brain power.

Infantino's art is excellent throughout. The story has a great splash, showing both teams jumping for the referee's tossed ball at the game start. Infantino loves to depict people up in the air. In his sf tales, they are often flying, but he is just as pleased to depict leaping basketball players.

Infantino frequently uses vertical panels here, as he did in Adam Strange. These panels' composition tend to be strongly based on verticals, formed by the players' leaping bodies. When Infantino wants to show a wider action, he develops broad horizontal panoramas. He gets much compositional use out of the marks on basketball court floor, weaving them into the geometric patterns of his panels. There is also a good campus landscape (p 5). Infantino frequently showed gracious outdoor plazas on Rann and other futuristic worlds; this campus scene has something of the same effect, although consistent with present day Earth landscaping ideas.

Danger on the Martian Links (#46, February-March 1963). Writer: John Broome. Art: Carmine Infantino.

Wale Marner, Earth's champion golfer of 2372, plays in a Martian tournament that is interrupted by an alien invasion. This comic toned story is notable for its look at the many innovations that have taken place in the game of golf in these future times. Some of the ideas are ingenious, and could be put into place with today's electronic technology. Broome always had a flair for new technological devices. Others involve non-violent hunting and evading of alien animals; these recall the similar tracking of alien animals in Fox's [Star Rovers](#) tales. Broome was quite insistent in his tales about the reality of social change. Several of his stories suggest that today's conventional ideas will change drastically in the future. Even a comic tale like this one has a subtext about change coming, even to a game as familiar and traditional as golf.

In Broome's future sports tales, such as this one and "Warriors of the Weightless World", the athletes spend a lot of time at awards banquets. These are upbeat, happy occasions. There is much public recognition at these events, something that is always important to Broome's protagonists, who dream of being heroes. The men are often dressed all alike, in future versions of tuxedos, sporty, cheerful clothes that convey a sense of social prestige and acceptance. There is a sense of

“I hope to have one more boxing match at the age of 55. Given that demographic at the age of 55 to 65, you've got to make a statement with your life. Otherwise, you are just existing.”
— George Foreman



brotherhood to all this, and one of belonging. As is usual in Broome, the organization to which the hero belongs is completely benevolent. These sports associations are civilian, non-violent, and utterly lacking in malice. They are good guys. Everyone at them smiles and is completely friendly, in a low-key way. Broome's characters often start their lives as socially marginalized characters, and such organizations represent deep dreams of belonging to society and finding brotherhood. They are perhaps more intensely longed for by social outsiders, than by people who already have strong social ties.

The expert athletes in Broome future sport stories remind one of all the magician characters in his other works. All of these men are highly skilled, and they can bring this repertory of skills to bear on unexpected science fiction situations in which they find themselves. They are also men who perform in public, and who get fame and public acclaim for their work.

It is a real life cliché that golfers must have steady nerves, and be imperturbable to anything that happens to them on the course. Broome repeats this truism, and raises it to the nth degree, by emphasizing all the strange sf events that can happen to his hero. This has a comic ring to it.

I did not like the alien invasion finale of this tale as much as its golf-oriented earlier sections. As an anti-war person, I dislike seeing war used as entertainment. Far too many of *Strange Sports Stories* involved war like themes. They also disfigured many of the early 1960's tales in its parent magazines, [Mystery in Space](#) and [Strange Adventures](#).

The Phantom Prizefighter (#47, April-May 1963). Writer: Gardner Fox. Art: Carmine Infantino. Based on a cover by Infantino.

A boxer is transformed by an alien so that opponents' punches travel right through his body; he becomes a carnival attraction. This is a minor tale without much entertainment value. Infantino's splash, showing the boxers in the ring, has merit. Elements of this tale recall the Joe Sarmachson - Carmine Infantino "Man of a Thousand Shapes" (*Strange Adventures* #66, March 1956).

Saga of the Secret Sportsmen (#47, April-May 1963). Writer: John Broome. Art: Carmine Infantino.

In a future world where all sports are played through virtual reality, small underground groups of athletes carry on the traditions of actual, physical sports events. This story sounds much more interesting than it actually is. Broome spends only a couple of pages here on virtual reality; he depicted it earlier in greater depth in "Explorers of the Crystal Moon" (*Strange Adventures* #56, May 1955). Still, this is the best and most imaginative part of the story. It is very similar to modern proposals about virtual reality, especially the large TV screens. Broome shows how the downfall of actual sports took place gradually, through a process that involved both technical innovation and social attitude change. This is similar to the more elaborate exposition of the decline of wood in his "The Wooden World War" (*Mystery in Space* #33, August-September 1956). Finally, his sports teams form an underground, rallying against an alien invasion; we've also seen all of this in other Broome tales, such as "The Doom From Station X" (*Mystery in Space* #15, August-September 1953).

None of Broome's main characters is a scientist. This is not typical of the Schwartz sf magazines, which often have a scientist hero. Broome perhaps compensates for this by flashing back to the inventor of virtual reality, briefly including him as a character in the tale. Fox will do something similar in "Duel of the Star Champions". This look at the historical development of new ideas is a persistent Broome approach.

The Man Who Drove Through Time (#48, June-July 1963). Writer: Gardner Fox. Art: Carmine Infantino. Based on a cover by Infantino.

A driver-inventor whose early car has accidentally transported him from 1896 to 1964 enters the Indianapolis 500 race, hoping its high speed will send him back to his sweetheart in 1896. This is the sunniest and happiest of all the *Strange Sports Stories*, and the best work of the series. This story has the same sort of structure as "The Hot-Shot Hoopsters", with the first half being the events leading up to the Big Game, and the second half being the athletic contest itself. Fox loads this story with charming detail. The first half has much on technological change, both in the 1890's and the 1960's. It is a vivid lesson in the history of science, all integrated into a well constructed time travel plot. The second half contains an inside look at the Indianapolis 500 and its traditions. This sort of informative scientific and historical detail recalls Fox's scripts for *The Atom*. This is the only work in *Strange Sports Stories* in which Fox included this sort of historical detail about a sport; it is a good approach, and one wishes there were more of it in the other tales.

"I was never famous until I went through the fence at St. Louis and killed two spectators. Promoters fell over one another to sign me up."

Barney Oldfield



Fox's best work has always been oriented towards his heroes and their technical challenges, and not towards bad guys, and this is true here as well. There are no villains in the tale. Everyone in the story is likable, especially the modest but determined hero. He is far more interested in getting back to 1896 than in winning the race, which seems pleasant. The hero is oriented towards the science fiction plot. The sports and racing aspects of the story just take place in the background, something that he accidentally gets involved with. This is appropriate to the tone of the story, which constantly evokes gentle humor at his being so out of place. There is something both surreal and delightful at seeing an 1890's car in the midst of all the sleek 1960's race cars at Indianapolis. This fish out of water effect is present right in Infantino's cover. The fact that the hero is completely oblivious to all this, that he is simply trying to get the time travel aspects of the story to work, only adds to the story's gentle charm.

This tale constitutes a Fox cycle, in the classic sense. Please see the article on [Adam Strange](#) for an in-depth look at Fox cycles. As in all Fox cycles, at the end the hero is in the same state at which he started, in this case back in 1896. The story is a very pure example of a Fox cycle. The entire plot consists exactly of one Fox cycle. The tale starts out at the beginning of the cycle, follows the hero's progress through the detail of the cycle, and concludes with the cycle coming full circle at the end of the story. This sort of plot construction adds to the personal, even intimate tone of the tale. We are seeing something archetypal coming out of Fox's mind, something that embodies his core approach as a constructor of stories. The story's wealth of detail can also be viewed as Fox exploring one of his cycles in depth. Each new step in the plot can be viewed as another stage in the cycle. Fox clearly enjoyed his cycles, and the reader does too.

The tale pleasantly echoes other Fox time travel stories. Fox wrote several time travel tales in 1962 for [Strange Adventures](#); please see that article for more detail. This story is perhaps closest to "The Two-Way Time Traveler" (Strange Adventures #143, August 1962). Both of these stories concern an ordinary guy who accidentally starts making time trips to another era; both plots concern his attempts to end this travel, and get back to his own time. Both stories involve pleasant, well constructed comparisons between our time and others, and the process of historical change. Both stories involve Fox cycles in their construction; both have a happy, upbeat quality.

The tale also recalls Adam Strange's occasional time travel adventures, especially "The Multiple Menace Weapon" (Mystery in Space #72, December 1961). In both stories, the location of the time travel is a busy street in New York City. Both tales involve a comic encounter with a New York traffic policeman, who is bemused and slightly bewildered by the events.

The hero of Schwartz magazine sf stories is often a scientist. This does not correspond very well with the needs of sports stories, which traditionally have an athlete hero. But in this tale, everything works out perfectly: it is logical for the inventor of a new car to be the hero of an auto racing tale. This gives the tale a natural, unforced quality in its choice of protagonist.

Duel of the Star Champions (#48, June-July 1963). Writer: Gardner Fox. Art: Carmine Infantino.

An Earth athlete on his way to the interplanetary Planethalon contest is waylaid by another contestant on a deserted planet, who uses a ray to drain the hero's brain of his "will to win". This is an OK story. Ever since [Fredric Brown's](#) prose sf story "Duel" (1945), there have been numerous tales about Earthmen and aliens fighting private contests on deserted planets. I like some of the challenges the hero faces in the first half of this tale on the strange planet; they remind one of the [Star Rovers'](#) adventures on various planetoids.

The made up sports contest name, Planethalon, is a pleasant variation on Pentathlon. The all powerful medical device here, the Panmedikron, reminds one of the name of the teleportation machine, the Orkinomikkron, in the early Adam Strange tale, "Invaders from the Atom Universe" (Showcase #18, January-February 1959). One also thinks of [Hawkman's](#) Absorbakon, and the Matter Master's Metachem. Fox liked compound names, made up of many parts sometimes used in science.

The second half of the tale, looking at the psychology of winning, is less appealing. Fox's mid-1960's stories looking at human psychology have never seemed enjoyable to me. They often concern men who have lost their drive or ability to function. These tales tend to be gloomy, and full of dubious psychological ideas.

“Baseball, for instance, has always been a game of insiders, played by those who could hit, run, field and throw a certain way, and managed by those who played well enough to eventually earn the keys to the front office. The old ideas of who should play in the big leagues, and who should decide who should play, will be replaced with new ideas.”

Billy Beane



Gorilla Wonders of the Diamond (#49, August-September 1963). Writer: Gardner Fox. Art: Carmine Infantino. Based on a cover by Infantino.

A scientist trains nine gorillas from infancy to be intelligent; they form a baseball team that tours the world. This story is something of a mess. Its biggest problems: the gorillas are treated as villains, out to conquer the world from humans; and the story's serious tone and lack of comedy. It is hard to root for anybody in this tale, and it is hard to enjoy a story which treats gorillas as bad guys. This is one of many DC Silver Age tales about intelligent gorillas. Usually they are treated sympathetically, which is what I and apparently most readers and writers of such comics like.

The best part of the story are the early sections, which deal with gorilla evolution. Fox posits that some radioactive event happened on Earth, which interfered with gorilla evolution, but not that of primitive humans. This allowed humans to become fully intelligent, but not gorillas. This is an interesting science fiction idea. It is one of several DC stories that look at the comparative evolution of humans and gorillas.

Warriors of the Weightless World (#49, August-September 1963). Writer: John Broome. Art: Carmine Infantino.

Medical student Cray Duncan becomes a leading player of Spaceball, a futuristic game played under weightless conditions in 2194. This richly detailed story fascinates throughout. It is another of Broome's "future sports" tales, like "Danger on the Martian Links". That story looked at future innovations in golf; this tale invents an entirely new game, Spaceball, and gives us an in-depth look at its play. Broome and Infantino even include a detailed diagram of a Spaceball court, as well as examples of Spaceball play and strategy. Spaceball is a professional sport, played by teams in front of huge crowds in arenas, like today's baseball and football. As is usual in Broome, he shows us how the game evolved; we also see such evolutions of innovations from small steps in many Broome tales. The story has another of Broome's standard approaches, a complete life history for his protagonist.

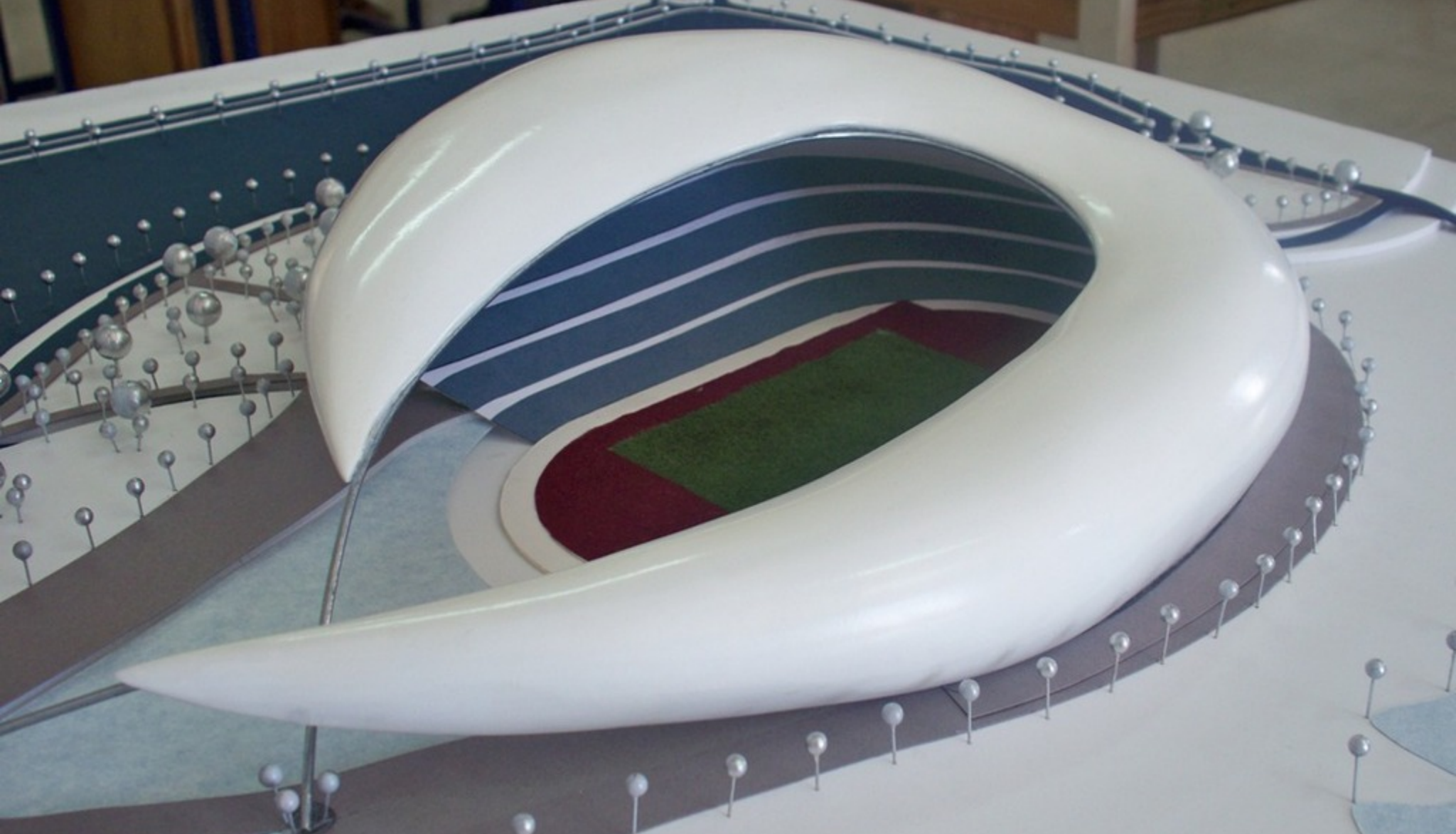
The Spaceball arenas are enclosed 3D rectilinear spaces. Broome like enclosed areas; he often had Green Lantern operating within such a region.

The second half of this tale involves the hero in a war; here militaristic aliens have launched an unprovoked attack on Earth. Our hero uses his Spaceball skills to defeat them, on the gravityless planetoid Zuuni of the title. Normally I'm not big on war tales, however, I have to admit that even I thoroughly enjoyed this one. This tale resembles Broome's earlier classic "Raiders of the Waterless World" (Mystery in Space #56, December 1959). That story's hero was an aspiring football player of the future, now working as a pilot in the space Navy; here we have a former Spaceball player, now a member of the Space-Force. Both stories contain an unprovoked attack by militaristic aliens. In both stories, the hero's actions help defeat a much better armed group of the attackers, and bring the war to an end. Both stories' hero's actions are ingenious, and involve the laws of physics. Even the titles of the two tales are similar. So are the names of the lead characters: Cray Duncan here, Carr Malcolm in the earlier tale. In both stories, the hero learns to value being part of the team.

There are differences between the two stories, as well. Football in the earlier tale was basically the game as we know it today, but Spaceball is an entirely new sport, and one strongly based in science fiction ideas, at that. This is in line with Broome's tendency to *science fictionalize* his material as he moves forward, to add new dimensions of sf ideas to ordinary, conventional parts of his previous plots.

The story recalls a bit Robert Heinlein's prose sf novel *Starship Troopers* (1959). As in that tale, we have an elite group of young athletes, who enlist when war threatens Earth. Mercifully, the war sections here in Broome's tale resemble spy intrigue, rather than any of the future infantry of Heinlein's novel. This tale of an athlete entering the armed services also resembles James Jones' *From Here to Eternity* (1951) in spots, especially when he is pressured by his superiors to play sports.

Infantino's art is strong throughout. He is especially innovative with the crystalline-metallic planetoid of Zuuni. The curving crystal landscape is beautiful and unique. The advanced Earth civilization shows the futuristic Art Deco cities and gracious living of Infantino's futures. I also enjoyed the white tuxes worn by the athletes at their awards banquet, and the V-necked Spaceball uniforms. The common bank of seats on which the athletes all sit side by side at the banquet both gives a futuristic touch to the interior design, and suggests the solidarity and brotherhood of the athletes.



SCIENCE FICTION, SPORTS, & JACK HALDEMAN BY CHRIS GARCIA



He was a long-haired dude sitting in the Consuite, chatting amiably with folks. I was at the table next door, I believe whittling away at a styrofoam coffee cup. Somehow, the topic came around to baseball, as sometimes happens in consuites, and the long-haired fellow said something that piqued my interest.

“The Giants have pitching, and Bonds, but not much else.”

And it was as if I'd been called in from the bullpen. I jumped into the conversation, defending the Giants (and as I remember it, they went 10-for-24 in September, and were out of it by the middle of the month, but that's neither here nor there). The conversation went around baseball, and into various other arenas as well. It was a lot of fun, me, twenty-five or so, and a bunch of grey-hairs enjoying fine talk.

That long-haired dude was Jay Haldeman, a fan, con-runner, and most interestingly, a writer of science fiction under the name of Jack Haldeman. He was an incredibly nice guy, and I didn't realise that I had read his stuff over the years. I had read his story in an early issue of OMNI, *To Race the Wind*, a sailing story, which was the only thing I knew about sailing up to that point (or the present). I had also read several of his other stories over the years. Stories about baseball, football, and even racing mammoth-like beasts called behemoths. It was an impressive set of stories, and after I met him, I started reading more and more of his stuff. He was awesome!

The idea that works against them, and in the end for them, is that sports and science fiction are incompatible. This is a total fallacy, of course. A great many science fiction fans are also sports fans. In fact, a great many sports practitioners are science fiction fans! So, seeing so many wonderful, fun, sometimes exuberant and/or heart-breaking stories based around sports in the genre actually adds to the impact.

The best introduction to Haldeman's sports-themed SF stories has to be *The Louisville Slugger*. It's the free one on his website, and for good reason; it's an excellent example of the way in which Jack Haldeman writes SF Sports. Here, it's something completely recognisable, the World Series, only it's between the team of Earth and the team of Arcturus. The winner gets to eat the loser. Not just the players, but the entire race. We're not shown the actual game, only the final out, the aftermath, the dejected star who walks away from the stadium for the last time, his entire race about to be eaten due to his team's loss. It's a powerful, and incredibly sad, story, but not without its comedy. The way he presents the impending doom of every human on the planet as being something that people just take in stride is strange, until you think about it with the idea that this must happen every year. Every time they play the series, the losing team's species (or is it genus?) get gobbled up by the winning. It's a fascinating idea. He followed it up with a sequel

“As a skinny kid growing up, I was never very good at sports. Even from the small pool of kids in the neighborhood I was nearly always the last guy chosen for the afternoon baseball or football games. I was pretty good at wrestling and gymnastics at school, being light and wiry, but that didn't cut much ice in the neighborhood. Kids being among the cruelest animals ever placed on this good earth, I caught a lot of flack. It amuses me now to realize I've probably made more money writing about sports than they ever did playing them.”

Jack Haldeman

called *Hometeam Advantage*. It's the story of what happens after our 'hero' leaves the bar. It also gives us an 'out' as it were. It's something of a coward's way out, to be honest, but it does say something about Haldeman's sports fiction: he really got that this was all window-dressing. That's not to say that there's no power in fiction, but whether or not the Arcturians ate every human there is not nearly as important as giving a reason, or seeming to give a reason, for them not to be. It's like Asimov's Laws. If they hold, then there's nowhere for a story to go. This way, there was something more.

Another great story is Haldeman's wonderful *The Thrill of Victory*. On one level, it's about robots taking over the NFL after it's been ruled that football is too dangerous to play for humans. That makes sense, I guess. We follow the robot quarterback of the Daytona Beach Armadillos, Bronco, from his victory in the division championship into the locker room, and then into controversy as his team's mechanic is indicted for putting circuits into the robots that gave them a competitive spirit. On the second level, it's about how the NFL has turned into a pile of parity covered in gloss and excuses. The executives have far too much power and are trying to take the game out of the hands of the players.

Or at least that's what the critics have said.

Haldeman's stories are compact, well-structured, and if they seem a bit slight, that's because they look at the world through a specific lens. The sequel to *The Thrill of Victory*, *The Agony of Defeat*, was a much simpler story, with a much more complicated world. The Armadillos are facing the Castroville Artichokes (Castroville, CA, is the Artichoke capital of the world! I have to drive through it every time I go to LA!) and while the Armadillos are Robots, the Artichokes are genetically modified... well, humans might be giving them a little too much credit. It's not as telling as the first stories in the series, but it deals more with the game and the drama of the Super Bowl, and of sports in general. It was also a somewhat dark and dim look at the world of sports reporting, and particularly the sideline reporter. The story is fun, and it's probably the funniest thing I've read from Haldeman as far as premise goes. It's also not at all implausible.

Oddly, all those stories are at least somewhat connected. It's a thin connection, but it's there.

The description that most hooked me from the Jack Haldeman website was for the story *Tale of Two Cities*. **“You thought that the Baltimore Colts moving out in the dead of night was bad? See what happens when a sports team is so established that it's easier to move the fans than the teams, even when it means moving them to another planet.”**

How could I not want to read that?

The story is only barely a sports story. It's a fandom story; it's a story about what it means to love something like a sports team, or an author, or a brand of scotch, whatever. It's about identifying with a team and dealing with how the teams can manipulate their fans. The greatest thing about the story, which is not at all what it was pitched as, is the fact that The League is the villain. It's powerful, more powerful than the Government (and it's quite possible that it IS the government) and it makes the choices that serve it, not the players, not the sport, and certainly not the fans. In fact, we don't really get a definite idea of what the sport is. It means more than the on-field activity; it means everything to those who really LOVE it. You see this perfectly in fandom. There are some folks who could care less about the writing, about the movies, about any of it. What they love is Fandom, and they truly love it. Try to take it away, and boom, done. It's a powerful attachment that people have with these concepts.

Of course, these aren't his only sports shorts. Even when his sports stories aren't really impressive, like the somewhat disappointing political allegory based in the world of Professional wrestling, they still say something important that is being talked about in the background. Haldeman's stories about pool or sailing make great points and highlight the importance of the game in life. A fine story about racing giant massive animals called behemoths made me think about how we should view not only what we play, but where our limits as a species are. They all take a view of the world through the way sports are played, promoted, worshiped. It's not like *The Rollerball Murders* where the world is so much more interesting than the story itself, but you come to the world through the glimpses of how the players, and spectators, look at what they're doing. That makes them feel important.

No question that Haldeman's sports stories are fascinating, and he had a view of sport as an arena for life, and telling the stories the we had did made things far more entertaining. I love them, and without these wonderful stories, I'd never have even thought of doing an issue of a zine about sports.

And I'm glad I had a reason to re-read those stories!



WELCOME TO SUPER BOWL C BY GREG WILLIAMS



It was uncomfortably warm in the crowded press room, and the reporters who were physically present rudely stepped through the holographic projections of their colleagues in order to find some breathing space. The result was a macabre scene of merged human forms, jostling, chatting, joking, all waiting for their prey. In-person conferences were rare, but on the 100th anniversary, the GFL had spared no expense, converting an old orbital mining facility (affectionately known as “Mudville” by the former occupants) into a state of the art conference room, even pressurizing it and spinning it up to a standard Terran gravity. It looked like a scene from 50 years prior, but it played great on the networks and was paying off in massive ad revenue.

“There he is!” yelled Johnson from FOXgalactic, as a huge man walked tentatively into the room, dwarfing his handlers, press agent, and coach. He was the perfect specimen of a GFL quarterback - 2.1 meters tall, 135kg of fine-tuned bone, sinew, and muscle. Used to dodging tacklers weighing 175 kilos or more, and playing in variable gravity environments from almost zero to twice Terran standard, he moved with the confidence and grace that comes with being a premiere athlete. Looking closely at his eyes, though, one could see that the 22 year old would rather be getting hit by the entire front line of the Mars Maulers than be in this room.

“The thing about football - the important thing about football - is that it is not just about football.”
— Terry Pratchett,
Unseen Academicals

He was used to attention, and crowds. His Pop Warner games had been filled with parents, supporters, and protestors. His high school received millions in donations during his tenure there, and packed every seat in their bleachers for every game. Notre Dame scouted him at the age of 13, and offered him a full ride for both undergrad and graduate school, if he should decide to return after his GFL tour.

But then, in his Senior year at ND, the GFL was sanctioned for running an illegal genetic modification program. They had gotten away with “enhancements” and “tweaks” (officially known in the GFL labs as Stage 1 and Stage 2), but Lance was the first of his kind – the very first football player to be designed from the ground up. There were hundreds of lawsuits – people claiming he wasn’t a citizen, or even Human. The injunction suits from other Universities, then the GFL players union, all of it intended to keep the kid from doing what he was literally designed to do – play football. When the draft came, he was a complete wildcard – no team wanted to waste money on the best quarterback in history, if he wouldn’t be allowed to play. The offers kept dropping – and then all got withdrawn. His agent committed suicide, and other than practice and workouts, the kid went into total seclusion. He wasn’t used to losing – he’d won every game he’d ever played.

Right before Draft Day – Charles “Cheapskate” McCaskey IV, owner of the Chicago Bears, sent an offer – Sign on for league minimum for two seasons, and then IF during that contract the legal battle went his way, and he was allowed to legally play, AND he was uninjured, they’d extend the contract for two years, at double the highest historic salary the GFL had ever paid. It was insulting... ridiculous.

The kid took it. The GFL handled the court battles. He got to play. Ever since then, his every waking moment was under scrutiny – the press, the fans, the league, they all wanted their piece.

Now that the Bears were in their first Super Bowl since 2007, it had gotten even crazier. This circus was a perfect example – Commissioner Elway’s grandstanding was the only thing allowing him a moment to himself for the first time in....

A statuesque blonde woman with incredibly large and perfectly white teeth stepped up to the podium. “Ladies, Gentlemen, and Others, welcome to this press event for the Galactic Football League. As most of you know, my name is Susan Elway, Commissioner of the GFL. As we approach this historic 100th Super Bowl, I know that everyone has a lot of questions, which I will try to address.”

Susan flashed her trademark (literally, in 2060 her family obtained a registered trademark for it) Elway Smile™ and continued. “This year’s game will be played at the newly constructed Midway Station Stadium, which will keep the broadcast lag to a maximum of 11 minutes. We know this limits the number of seats available, but feel we’ll have adequate facilities for those able to afford the trip to be on-site for the game. Thanks again to our partner Virgin Galactic for chartering special runs from both the Terran and Martian terminals for this historic event.”

“We know about the logistics! What about the GenMods?” yelled one of the frustrated press corps.

Elway’s eyes narrowed ever so slightly as she tried to pick out the speaker from the crowd. She’d have security review the video later, and that would be one less annoying reporter to cope with in the future. “OK,” she said, “We know there’s still some lingering controversy, but we settled all of this with the GFL Players Union last week, and the UN Ethics committee has cleared us to move ahead.”

Susan beamed the Elway Smile™ and said “As of today, all GFL teams will be permitted to fill their complete rosters with genetically designed players. Super Bowl 100 will have the best players human minds can design for the game of football!”

“On that note,” she continued, “I’ll let you all have what you finally came for - the GFL is proud to introduce last year’s #1 draft pick, Heisman Trophy winner, 2065-66 GFL MVP, Team Captain and Quarterback for the Chicago Bears.... Lance Casey!”

Every eye, head, camera, and holo pickup swiveled towards the spot where Lance had been standing just seconds before... the more astute cameramen were able to pick up the blur of movement as the kid jumped through his limo airlock and took off to God knew where. Chaos ensued – Elway went ballistic, and the GFL servers immediately got overloaded with protests from fans and press.

But there was no joy in Mudville... mighty Casey had snuck out.



FANNISH BETTING BY HELEN MONTGOMERY

I love trash talking with my friends over our rival sports teams. When they meet in the playoffs, that trash talk can reach epic proportions, and I love every minute of it. Often, we end up having a bet on the outcome of the series.

I never bet money though. Much too prosaic and boring.

The first bet with a fannish friend I ever made was...not appropriate for publication. Ahem. Moving on.

The second bet with a fannish friend I ever made was with Tim Miller. I'm a Detroit Red Wings fan, and he's a (sadly misguided) Dallas Stars fan. In the spring of 2008, the two teams met in the Western Conference Finals of the Stanley Cup playoffs. We were both going to Denvention that summer, and so the bet was decided - loser had to wear the winning team's jersey all day on Saturday at Worldcon.

Either way, we were going to be in the heart of the Colorado Avalanche territory, and neither the Wings nor the Stars are beloved there.

Tim lost. During the day, he wore my Steve Yzerman jersey - but he wore "armor" underneath. His "Red Wings Suck" t-shirt. If you look closely at the photo, you can barely see it.

I agreed to wear his Mike Modano jersey because it would make for a funny photo, and because Modano is a Detroit boy (who retired from the game after becoming a Red Wing). But it came off really quickly to avoid long-term exposure to cooties!

I graciously allowed him to take off the jersey and wear something nice for the Hugo Awards Ceremony that evening.

Since that time, I've had other bets with Tim over both hockey and baseball. I've also had several bets with Chris Garcia on the same two sports. The standard bet has become the "Facebook profile picture" bet. Loser has to change their profile picture to the logo of the winning team for the remainder of their playoff run.

You would be amazed at how distressing losing can be when that is the bet. To have to stare at that hated team's logo every time you go on Facebook...ugh. I've had friends who have blocked me during the times I've lost because it was so upsetting to them to see it!

All in all, it's loads of fun, and really no significant risk. Plus, when your team wins, it's *glorious*!



IT'S FANDOM'S FAULT I WATCH FOOTBALL BY GLENN GLAZER

It's really all Darth Vader's fault. Sort of. It's actually this guy:
Yeah, I used to watch football when I was a kid, but it was sort of a "if it happens to be on" sort of thing. Like watching bowl games at family New Year's Day brunches.
Then, somewhere after Fandom woke the fan in me, I saw that guy and had this weird fugue. It was like watching a football game with a con overlaid on top of it, shifting back and forth. The more I looked, the more I saw guys like these guys:



And it struck me: these guys are hall costumers and cosplayers. They just don't know it.

Look at the precision of the lines in the left guy's face paint. That's not a casual effort, that's the result of practicing makeup application for dozen Sundays for ten or twenty years. Look at the level of detail and realism in the facial appliance of the guy on the right and don't tell me there isn't a master costumer under that.

“Well, I like the 49ers because they're pure of heart, Seattle because they've got something to prove, and the Raiders because they always cheat.”

Lisa Simpson

Some football fans are content to stick a wedge of cheese on their head and call it a day. Not these guys. I bet it takes them *hours* to get ready for the games every Sunday.

And so I fell in love first not with the sport, but with the fans of the sport, finding a kindred spirit in the way they bonded in community tailgates, the ways they demonstrated their fandom through costuming and the pride they took in their arts.

Then, back in 2004, a fannish friend who doesn't watch sports at all was having a pirate themed Halloween party with a costume contest and a set color scheme of silver and black taken from the Jolly Roger.

I couldn't resist. With some help from my then-fiancé Allison Hershey, I gave it my best shot at being a Raider fan in costume.

Note two things about the following picture. The first is that I actually won a prize in the contest for “Most Creative Interpretation of Theme” because while the silver and black was obvious to me, it wasn't to anyone throwing the party. The other is to show how badly I suck at makeup work (note for example, the wide areas of exposed skin towards the hairline) and by counterexample, just how good those guys in those above pictures are. They are rocking it as costumers at a level far beyond what I could ever hope to achieve and I really tip my hat to them.

Now, if we could only win a few games, life would be just grand.



A primer on muggle Quidditch

According to International Quidditch Association rules, seven players per team are on the field at a time. Each position wears a different colored headband. Four balls are in play at one time.

THE TEAM



1 SEEKER

chases and catches the snitch to score points and end the game; must grab the snitch out of the snitch runner's pants



3 CHASERS

score goals with the quaffle by throwing or kicking it into the hoops



2 BEATERS

use the bludgers to disrupt other players



1 KEEPER

guards the hoops from opposing chasers

SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL QUIDDITCH ASSOCIATION
DTH/ARIANA RODRIGUEZ-GITLER, KEVIN UHRMACHER

THE BALLS

1 SNITCH

The release of the snitch starts the game. The snitch is a tennis ball inside a sock tucked into the waistband of a player called the snitch runner. He can leave the field and play pranks on other players to avoid getting caught. Once caught, the game is over.

Points: 30



1 QUAFFLE

A volleyball is used to score goals by throwing or kicking it into the hoops. The keepers and chasers are the only ones allowed to use this ball. Chasers can use a quaffle to block incoming bludgers.

Points: 10



3 BLUDGERS

These balls are used by beaters to set back other players. When a player is hit with a bludger, he must drop any ball he is holding, return to his side and touch one of his goalposts before re-entering play.



QUIDDITCH: A SPORT FOR A NEW GENERATION BY JAMES HINSEY

I've been a fan of Quidditch since 2010 and a fan of the Harry Potter book series since reading them all in 2007. Having been a reader of Science Fiction since the age of 6 or 7, I grew up reading the Heinlein, Norton, and Del Rey Juveniles along with many others. Reading J.K. Rowling's books of young Harry Potter brought me back to the feelings I had reading those juveniles, but instead of traveling through space and time, I was immersed in a world of magic and wizards. I also discovered the immense creative fandom surrounding the Potter series shortly afterwards; fan fiction, fan conventions, wizard rock, and muggle quidditch. Muggles are the non-magical folk in the Potter books and muggle quidditch is the version played at numerous colleges today.

In 2010 I went to New York City to watch the final games of the Quidditch World Cup being run by the International Quidditch Association (IQA). I instantly fell in love with the game as a spectator. I could see the passion these college kids had for the game. They were keeping the whimsical nature of the game, but also employing the athleticism of modern college sports. I saw their camaraderie with their fellow competitors on and off the field. At the end of the final match the emotions of winning were just as high as for any other team win for any other sport. They had truly turned something that started on the pages of fiction into a sport that was fun, exciting and worthy of playing by anybody.

If you've read J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books or seen the 8 films based on the series then you'll have read or seen quidditch, the major sport of Harry's wizarding world. For those who haven't it can be best described as a fast-paced, high-flying game with players mounted on brooms trying to score points for their team or defend their goals from the opposing team. As the points rack up, one player from each team attempts to catch the Snitch, a golden golf-ball with hummingbird wings. The game goes on until it's caught with more points awarded for the catch. Quidditch can seem rather silly and confusing; there are multiple balls in play, different positions that have their own gameplay dynamics, three hoops to score on.

Rowling developed the game for her book series that takes place in a school for young witches and wizards. Harry Potter just happens to excel at broom-riding, just as his father was, earning him a position on his "house" team as



“Er – have the Bludgers ever killed anyone?” Harry asked, hoping he sounded offhand.

“Never at Hogwarts. We’ve had a couple of broken jaws but nothing worse than that. You don’t have to worry about the Quaffle or the Bludgers –”

“– unless they crack my head open.”

“Don’t worry, the Weasleys are more than a match for the Bludgers – I mean, they’re like a pair of human Bludgers themselves.”

J.K. Rowling,
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

a Seeker, the one that tries to catch the Snitch. At age 11, Harry just found out he's a wizard in the first novel so everything is a new experience for him. We learn that Quidditch is an old sport and that its popularity among wizarding-kind is huge and in a later book we see Harry and friends at a World Cup. Rowling developed the rules and background so extensively that she also published a small textbook entitled *Quidditch Through the Ages* containing its history, and lists teams throughout the world.

As the Potter series was published from 1997 to 2007, it quickly became a worldwide phenomenon, breaking records in sales, and especially records in readership by children. The first book was really geared toward that children's age group matching Harry's. It sparked their imaginations as they grew up with each book, and seeing Harry on the big screen, the thought of playing quidditch for real became a “What if?” or a “Someday” possibility. In many of their minds they thought it would be really cool to be able to play quidditch.

Sure enough one Sunday afternoon in 2005 on the campus of Middlebury College, Vermont in the USA, several students tried playing the game they grew up reading about. Xander Manshel wrote out a rule book to give to the players, turning the theoretical flying game into a practical grounded game that anyone could play. Muggle Quidditch quickly became so popular throughout campus that an Intramural league formed. Soon friends of Middlebury students started plans to form teams at their respective schools. In 2007 Middlebury and a team from Vassar College compete in the first World Cup. The following year at Middlebury 12 teams competed including a team from Canada. 21 teams the year after played. In order to manage the growing number of colleges and players, the founders from Middlebury formed the International Quidditch Association to assist organizing teams and update the rule book. In 2010 in a small park in New York City 46 teams from colleges, high schools, and community teams compete in World Cup IV with 10,000 spectators and 40 media outlets over 2 days. 2011 Quidditch World Cup was also in New York City at Randall's Island with 93 teams, and the final matches held in Icahn Stadium.

The number of teams at the World Cup was just a tip of the iceberg to the growing numbers across the country and elsewhere. Students in colleges in Australia, France, United Kingdom formed teams and organized their own tournaments. The IQA regionalized and started qualifying regional tournaments to determine which teams would attend the World Cup. The World Cup location was now a bid process, the first city to win was Kissimmee, Florida. The IQA also developed referee training and qualifications, and formed a Rules committee to continually develop and revise the rulebook each year as teams and players concerns come up regarding game play. All these help contribute to making the sport fully realized.

One unique aspect they've been able to expand from the book version is something called “Title 9¾” in which team members are not limited to one gender. It is to promote gender equality and inclusivity similar to the law meant to prevent gender discrimination in education which caused many changes to the way high schools and colleges dealt with athletics. Title 9¾ is also meant to include those who identify outside of the traditional gender binary.

Here is what the US Quidditch web site has for the basic rules:

Quidditch is a co-ed contact sport with a unique mix of elements from rugby, dodgeball, and tag. A quidditch team is made up of seven athletes who play with brooms between their legs at all times. While the game can appear chaotic to the casual observer, once familiar with the basic rules, quidditch is an exciting sport to watch and even more exciting to play.

Three **chasers** score goals worth **10 points** each with a volleyball called the **quaffle**. They advance the ball down the field by running with it, passing it to teammates, or kicking it. Each team has a **keeper** who defends the goal hoops. Two **beaters** use dodgeballs called **bludgers** to disrupt the flow of the game by “knocking out” other players. Any player hit by a bludger is out of play until they touch their own goals. Each team also has a **seeker** who tries to **catch the snitch**. The snitch is a ball attached to the waistband of the **snitch runner**, a neutral athlete in a yellow uniform who uses any means to avoid capture. The snitch is worth **30 points** and its capture **ends the game**. If the score is tied after the snitch catch, the game proceeds into overtime.

During play, players are forbidden from taking certain actions, or fouls. Players who commit fouls face different consequences depending on the sever-

“Harry was speeding toward the ground when the crowd saw him clap his hand to his mouth as though he was going to be sick—he hit the field on all fours—coughed—and something gold fell into his hand. 'I've got the snitch!' he shouted, waving it above his head, and the game ended in complete confusion. 'He didn't catch it, he nearly swallowed it,' Flint was still howling twenty minutes later, but it made no difference—Harry hadn't broken any rules and Lee Jordan was still happily shouting the results—Gryffindor had won by 170 points to 60.”
— J.K. Rowling,
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

ity of the offense. A back to hoops foul indicates that a player must stop and return to their hoops, as though knocked out. A yellow card indicates that a player must spend one minute in the penalty box. A red card indicates that a player is barred from the rest of the game.

I wanted to get involved in the IQA as more than just a spectator so I volunteered to be a representative for the teams in my state, little Rhode Island. I use Facebook extensively, and I could see teams were also using it as their main social media outlet. I compiled a listing of Facebook pages and Facebook groups for all the teams, clubs, leagues, and associations I could find who were playing muggle quidditch. When I say there are over a thousand teams around the world, it is true. In the last 4 years there has been an explosion of teams forming all over Europe, South America, and now just beginning in Africa. The lists I compiled could help teams see how extensive the sport has spread, make contact with teams in their area, and show their supporters the growth and lend legitimacy to their efforts for things like fundraising. I've also done some reports on local quidditch teams and tournaments for a local public access television show that I work on called Sci-Fi Journal. I shot video footage when I went to those 2 World Cups in NYC and most recently at the Southern New England Quidditch Conference tournament in April 2014. I turned that footage in news stories for the show. Sci-Fi Journal is a news program that covers the genres of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror in various media forms such as film, television, books, video games, animation, and collectibles. I report on things like the latest Anime from Japan, and also anything in the Harry Potter-verse, such as the conventions, wizard rock and especially quidditch.

Quidditch is mainly played by college and high school students, but there are community teams made up of people who started out as fans of the Potter books, or folks who happened upon a team playing the game and joined in. There are players on many of the college teams now who haven't read the Potter books. The physical aspects quidditch and the competition appealed to them when they joined. Many players never thought they would be part of a team sport before, so this is a new experience for them. They've become like families, long lasting friends, or formed close relationships through meeting their significant others by playing quidditch.

I started out as a spectator and I've tried playing, but I'm just not in physical condition to keep up with the players. I do my part to promote and spread the love for quidditch where I can because I see this as a great way to incorporate being part of Fandom and a Sport for future generations.

Links:

<http://www.usquidditch.org/>

<http://www.iqaquidditch.org/>

<http://iqaworldcup.com/>

<http://www.quiddata.org> (Map of official and unofficial teams, needs updating)



4

CONSPORTS BY JANICE GELB

Readercon is widely known as one of the most - if not **the** most - serious of conventions. Its program consists mainly of serious discussions about science fiction and fantasy. Its dealers room consists solely of books. Therefore, at the only Readercon I attended, in 1999, I was stunned at the number of attendees who eventually joined me at the TV in the bar to watch the US women's soccer team in the FIFA World Cup final.

Part of my amazement was my history of watching sports at conventions. Especially now that I live in Australia and have a more limited chance to watch US sports but even before, I tend to try to catch game broadcasts, especially if my teams are involved in them! I remember attending OryCons in Portland, generally held towards the end of the college football season, when I was bursting with news about upsets or successes and had to chase down local fan John Lorentz to share the details with the only other person who would care. When I lived in LA and attended Loscons, the preponderance of college rivalry games over Thanksgiving weekend was a major distraction from the con.

Smofcon, held in the first weekend of December, usually takes place on the weekend of college football conference playoffs. Often my college football team, the University of Florida Gators, has been playing in the SEC championship game. It being on a Saturday when I don't use electricity, I'd have to hope that someone might have the game on in an overflow bedroom of the con suite, or that I could find seating near but not in the lobby bar showing the game. (I can't spend money either so it's awkward to sit where they're actually serving food or drink.) One year, the only other person interested in the game was UK fan Tim Illingworth, whose wife Marcia went to Tennessee!

If championship games feature certain other schools, the odds go up that someone will have the TV on: Bobbi Armbruster from UCLA, John Lorentz from Oregon State, Mary Kay Kare from Oklahoma, and Randy Smith from Nebraska are all fellow fanatics so even if my game isn't on, at least I can catch updates. (In 2006, the only people who were glued to the set due to big games for their schools were

"The difference between the old ballplayer and the new ballplayer is the jersey. The old ballplayer cared about the name on the front. The new ballplayer cares about the name on the back."
- Steve Garvey

women: me, Bobbi, and Mary Kay!) Occasionally I've rudely been late to, held up, or completely blown off a dinner party to see the end of a game or a big bowl announcement.

I've often wished that the days of college and pro football games were reversed as Sundays when I can turn on the TV are even more popular at Smofcon for football-watching: Patriots fan Gay Ellen Dennett, Steelers fan Jim Mann, and Bobbi with her Packers are all usually in front of the set if their teams are playing.

Smofcons aren't only for football. At Smofcon in 2013, my Australian husband Stephen was helping run the fannish inquisition while one of the matches of The Ashes, a major cricket contest between Australia and England, was occurring, so I monitored the score on my phone during the inquisition and updated him during breaks. (We also did some trash-talking with UK fan Colin Harris in the con suite afterward :->)

As you can see, it's not just football that attracts me. I'm also a big fan of the Olympics, so the years when Boskone in Boston coincides with the Winter Olympics, I spend a lot less time going to programming and helping in Program Ops. In 1998, this devotion caused a stain on my reputation: Walter Jon Williams, a long-time buddy of mine, was the Guest of Honor at Boskone and he and I had been talking all weekend about the Olympics. The men's figure skating final was on during the dead dog party and although we got them to put it on the TV in the con suite, it was way too noisy to hear anything and hard to concentrate amidst the noise and chaos. He suggested that we watch the rest of it in his room, which was on the next floor. You can imagine what went through the minds of a couple of people who saw me disappear with him and then return an hour or so later!

Attending conventions also has provided the opportunity to see baseball live and in person. Thanks to convention travel, I've attended baseball games with fellow fans at Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City, Wrigley Field in Chicago, Fenway Park in Boston, Jack Murphy Stadium in San Diego, the Seattle Kingdome, Shea Stadium in New York, and, most memorably, Hoover Metropolitan Stadium in Birmingham, Alabama.

In 1994, basketball legend Michael Jordan was playing for the Birmingham Barons minor league baseball team and DeepSouthCon was in Birmingham that year. A group of us from the con, including Tim Illingworth, loaded into fan Gary Robe's van, and headed out to a game. It was stifling hot but we did see Jordan get a hit. (As graceful as Jordan was on a basketball court, that's how awkward he was running to first.) During the game, I spotted a TV crew lumbering down the aisle next to us and shouted loudly while pointing to Tim, "This guy's from England." Sure enough, they stopped to interview him and us. We found out later that this caused some excitement in the airport bar when Baen editor Toni Weisskopf and some other fans from DSC who were waiting for their flights suddenly spotted us on TV.

Unfortunately, my plans for taking Stephen to watch a cricket match at legendary ground Lords during Loncon 3 fell through due to thunderstorms. However, I'm likely to have less time to spend in Program Ops at Boskone next year because it falls during the Cricket World Cup - advance Australia fair!





A FAT TUB OF GOO, PAPER BASEBALL AND A DIFFERENT DIMENSION OF FANDOM BY RJ JOHNSON

I moved to Chicago in the summer of 1985 and was living with Alan Salmi. While I was involved with fandom in college at Purdue, I hadn't really connected with it since moving north. He told me about a weekly gathering of fandom called "Thursdays", which at least told me when it took place. The first one I went to was somewhere in Rogers Park (I know I got there under my own steam courtesy of the CTA) and I got to it before Alan arrived. So, I was in my least favorite social environment: by myself in the midst of people I knew nothing about.

I was ambling aimlessly through whoever's apartment (sorry, the details of who was hosting that week were lost to the dim mists of my memory long ago), when I heard someone mention "Terry Forster's hitting card." Hey, a snippet of conversation that was familiar to me! In college I played Statis-Pro tabletop baseball wherein each player's statistical performance was recreated on a little card. Relief pitchers like Forster (whom David Letterman fondly nicknamed "Fat Tub O' Goo") were particularly fun abominations because he was a pitcher who could [a] hit and [b] had a small enough number of plate appearances that he had a .397 batting average and a .474 slugging percentage for his career. So, of course, like every tabletop gamer in the history of tabletop gaming, we would exploit Terry's 6 or 8 at-bats into some obscene number of plate appearances in our all-star leagues.

So, this was my in, tenuous though it might be. I tapped the gentleman who was talking about Forster's hitting on the shoulder and replied that while Forster was an obnoxious pitcher's hitting card, guys like Larry Milbourne was more exploitable because he played more positions. The gentleman, one Rich Rostrom, turned around and started discussing the relative merits of both and off we went as I discussed the joys of Statis-Pro (with its X-play sheet that included pitchers getting ejected for saying things like "Not me, blind one" to the home plate umpire) and he told me about this group of baseball and sf fans who comprised the Howard Street League and who played the APBA brand baseball game. By the end of that Thursday, Rich invited me to meet other guys in the league soon.

The meeting was at Lanny Waitsman's apartment and he and Mike Walsh were in a heated battle to see who made the league playoffs (Lanny's Olympia Brewers took out Mike's Portland Lumberjacks in their final seven games of the season). I was the sort of baseball and baseball gaming nerd that I was hooked watching two other guys roll dice for their teams. The next season --1986-- I joined the league with my own franchise, the Van-

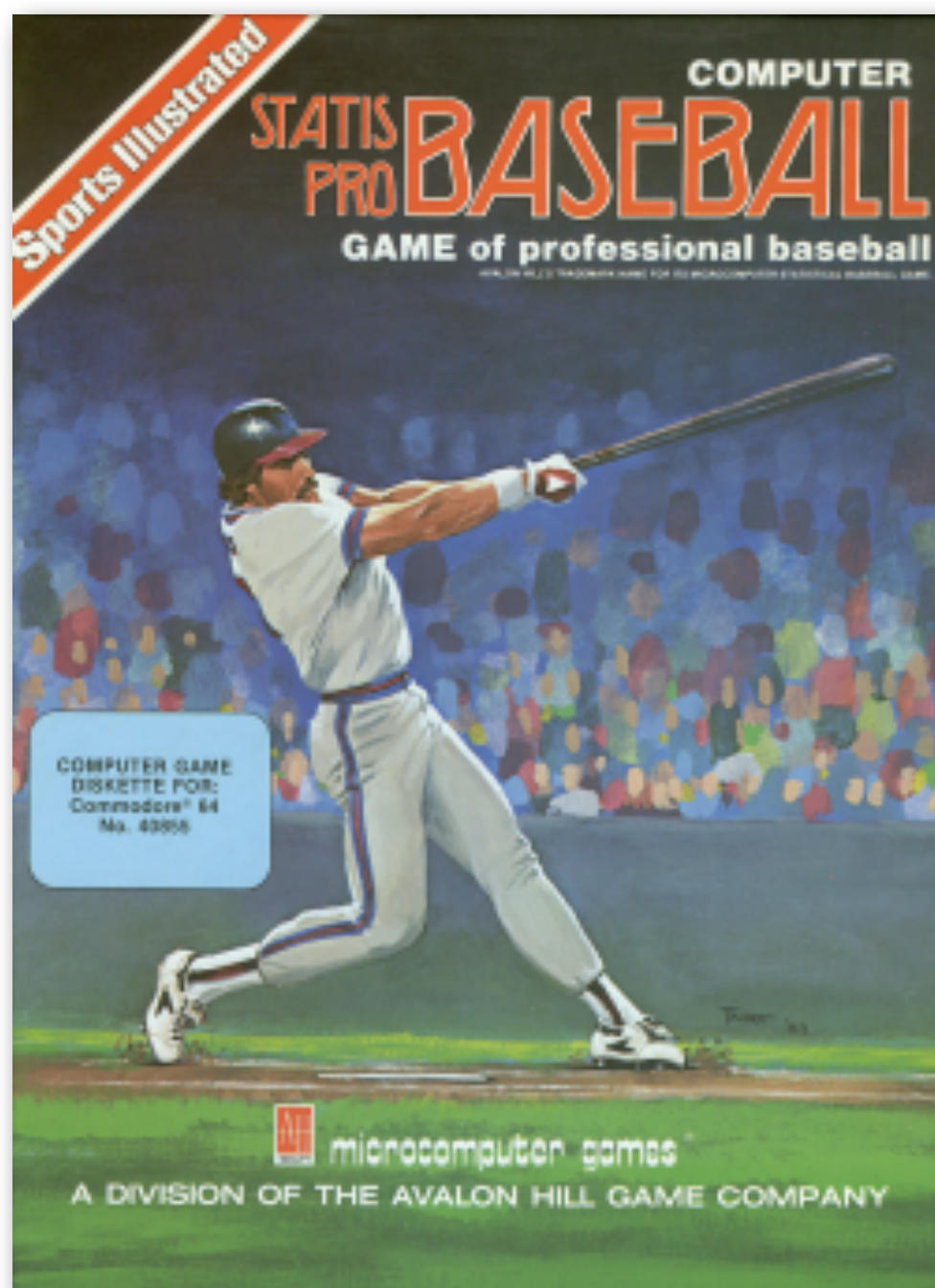


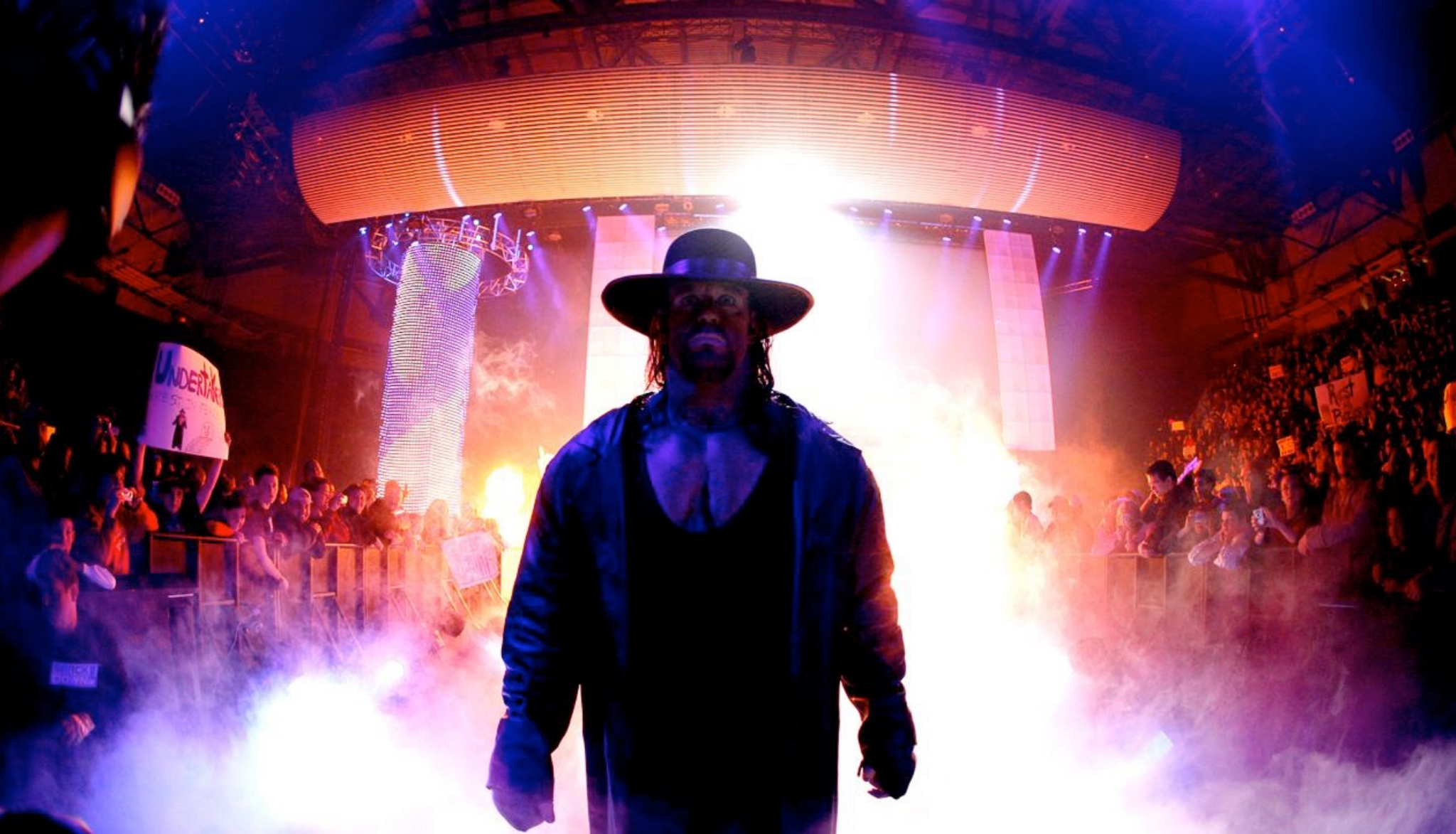
“Baseball is the only field of endeavor where a man can succeed three times out of ten and be considered a good performer.”
Ted Williams

cover Loggers, and began a fantastic 14 year run of baseball fun that also introduced me to many different aspects of Chicagoland fandom. Bill Roper, Doug Van Dorn and Mike Walsh, who introduced me to Moebius Theater and art auctioneering (Bill and Doug, along with Gretchen Roper, brought me into SpaceTime Theater, also). Lanny Waitsman and Jyll Mitchell (who were involved in publications for Windycon and Worldcons); John Donat, who did such a stellar job of running Windycon's consuite for so many years; and Rich Rostrom, who later became my roommate, and has always been a fine gentleman and inestimable source of historical and political minutiae (being one of the three living Republicans in Chicago proper).

The Howard Street League led to many fun moments, including cheering on Neifi Perez at Bill & Gretchen's house as he hit the home run that sent the Cubs into a one-game playoff with the Giants in 1998, minutes after Rod Beck (the Cubs own large and gooey closer) managed to blow a save against the Astros and imperil the Cubs presence in the playoffs. Because I got to know a lot of the people who managed conventions at a fairly high level, I got to work on my first Worldcon --Chicon in 1991-- as a second (underneath Jyll Mitchell) with very little stress (the department was Autographs & Readings, so it wasn't a high-stress group to begin with). And the league as a whole managed to bravely endure the brunt of fannish jokes because we were sports fans.

I have lots of fond memories of Chicago-area fandom, and many of them revolve around a baseball board game and the clatter of six-sided dice. Boxcars forever, Howard Street Leaguers!





WRESTLING WITH SCIENCE FICTION BY CHRIS GARCIA



There is, believe it or not, a lot of science fiction and fantasy in the world of professional wrestling. No, not just the fantasy that wrestling is two people trying to kill each other only with detailed scripts (and they're really more like loose outlines...) but real fantasy and science fiction stuff. It's been going on since the 1950s, with characters like The Mummy in the old days, not to mention masked wrestlers with bizarre back stories. Argentine wrestling, probably at its peak in the 1970s and early 80s, relied on strange backstories like Aliens and Monsters.

In the USA, there were several excellent examples starting in the 1980s with a team called The New Breed. You see, on Saturday afternoon, TBS showed wrestling from 3pm to 5pm. I'd watch cartoons, go for a bike ride or two, come back and watch me some 'rasslin'. This was NWA World Championship Wrestling from Atlanta, the television home of Dusty Rhodes, The Nature Boy Ric Flair, Barry Windham, The Road Warriors, and my hero, Buggy McGraw. It was slightly less polished and shiny than the WWF's product, but it was more violent, better worked, and often just better. I loved it and missed maybe 6 episodes between 1987 and 1992. There were two young wrestlers, jobbers we'd call them, who were new and usually lost to the bigger names. One was Chris Champion, who was really good at getting tossed around. The other, Sean Royal, was great at getting the audience to want to see him torn apart. They had been teaming in Florida, but out in California, we didn't get Championship Wrestling from Florida, so I never saw them until one afternoon when I was watching and on the screen came these two guys who were dressed all funny. You Gotta Fight For Your Right to Party played and they were announced as The New Breed and I was hooked. They had weird haircuts and shiny outfits. They looked like they were from the future, and when they were announced while they entered the ring, their hometown was said to be "The Future". Their interviews were interesting, because Champion was a helluva talker, but Royal was not so good, but their interviews were amazing, especially when you watch them today. Royal would talk about how the olden wrestler The Boogie-Woogie Man Jimmy Valiant rode a big ol' Harley, but they would run him over with their 'Spacecycles' and Champion added they were going to 'disfigure' him. IT WAS AWESOME!!!!

I love it!

They got some brief time to do promos, interviews to get their gimmick across, and they were awesome! They talked like they were from the far-off year of 2002, that the

'You know, all I ever wanted to do in my life was wrestle.'

Eddie Guerrero



wrestler Dusty Rhodes was President of the USA, that robots were common. This was AWESOME, and they were really good in the ring as well. They were good performers, especially Champion. They had a great double-team finishing move where Royal would hold their opponent up in a bear-hug and Champion would come off with a leg drop. It was AWESOME!!!!

Champion and Royal got into a car accident and Champion broke his arm. It was the worst possible time as they were starting a feud with the best tag team in the world at the moment, The Midnight Express. Champion was out for a few months, and when he came back he was wearing a cast with a couple of circuit boards taped to it, saying he had returned to the future and got the best computerized medical care there was in 2002, and he was back and ready to fight! It was brilliant, though it was the last we really saw of them as Royal felt like they were going nowhere and retired to become a construction worker. Go figure.

At the same time there was LASER TRON!!!! He was a wrestler who wore shiny silver garb, looking like a robot with a full black mask over his face. No eye holes or nothin! The fact that he wore a LazerTag vest was unimportant. He was supposed to be a futuristic wrestler, and The New Breed called him a Go-bot. In fact, in their best interview, they called Lazer Tron a Go-bot and that they were aware of Cybertron and Optimus Prime and declared their allegiance to the Decepticons. That was funny.

You had a few other science fiction and fantasy characters around the same time. There was Papa Shango in the WWF, and Kevin Sullivan and his Brood, but the best example has to be The Undertaker. Mark Calloway was a mid-card guy who had gone by a ton of different names all over the world. In Japan, he had been Punisher Dice Morgan, one of the truly great names in the history of wrestling. They brought him in to the WWF at Survivor Series as the surprise entrant on one of the teams. When he walked in to the strains of an organ playing funerary music, the arena went silent. He dressed like an Undertaker, and that was, in fact, his gimmick. At first, he was just a bad ass undertaker, but as time went on, the Undertaker took on more and more supernatural powers. He acquired a manager (later revealed to be the father to his half-brother, Kane) called Paul Bearer (who had, in fact, once been a mortician) and an urn which was where he got his power from. He could magically pop back up from even the worst beatings, and was able to control the lights and such. He was one of the most popular wrestlers in the world in the late 1990s, and is still a major figure, though he's semi-retired.

In Japan, they're a little bit different, and there've been some cool SF-like wrestlers over the years. A style of wrestling invented in Japan, though influenced by traditional Southern brawling and Lucha Libre, was 'Garbage' wrestling. This isn't really a derogatory term, it merely meant that they focused less on tradition 'work' and more on fighting, blood, gimmicks, and the like. The wrestling was very entertaining and quite violent. It was still worked like American wrestling, but it was stiff and fun. The first Garbage promotion was called Frontier Martial-Arts Wrestling, or FMW. They had matches like the Exploding Ring Death Match, and used lots of barbed wire. Their big star was Atsushi Onita, and he was fun. The other major Garbage promotion was called IWA Japan, and they were even more violent, often bringing in Mick Foley under the Cactus Jack gimmick. They had several wrestlers who were originally characters from horror films, including Leatherface, Freddy Krueger, and Jason from Friday the 13th. They were huge, and they were almost all terrible in the ring, but when you're doing matches with tubs of glass around the ring, or having people take bumps onto thumbtacks, it's a little easier. They all eventually went on to FMW, and there they did their crazy gimmicks. Leatherface used to run through the audience with a chainsaw that shot sparks. That was cool!

There has been an on-going stream of weird science fictional wrestling promotions in Japan since the 1990s. The first was called Go Gundan. Headed by Ryuma Go, it's main title was the Interplanetary Championship, held by Ryuma Go himself. They did small cards on their own, but mostly they appeared on shows run by the smaller wrestling companies. The one exception was the time they appeared at the Tokyo Dome. Weekly ProWres, one of the two major weekly wrestling magazines in Japan, had a huge show at the dome and every major, and quite a few minor, promotions sent matches. Go Gundan did an Alien Death Match for the Interplanetary Championship with Ryuma Go vs. Uchu Majin Silver X. The match was actually hilarious as there were a half-dozen weird wrestlers who were fighting against Go and doing sloppy moves while wearing weird monster masks. It's as weird as it sounds. More recently, there's been a promotion called Secret Base, which is a weird sort of spy vs. spy science fictional wrestling thing.

This style of wrestling influenced American wrestling geeks, and especially those smaller guys who tended to work the Jersey wrestling shows. One of them, a dude named Mike Quackenbush, founded Chikara Pro, a wrestling promotion that is part-comedy, part-Lucha Libre, part-weirdness. They have wrestlers who are supposedly a colony of ants, another that are supposedly pharaohs reincarnated, and there's lots of mind control and other strange happenings. One of the

"By the time I'm
done with you,
you're gonna be
saying my name
backwards."

Mad Dog Vachon

best gimmicks they do is slow motion, where the two wrestlers in the ring move in slow motion until something happens that snaps them out of it. They had to take a break, as they weren't turning a profit, so they came up with this weird combination of time-travel and amnesia and other strangeness. If you are ever in Philly, and happen to see that Chikara is doing a show, GO! It's great fun.

Now, the explosion of wrestling's popularity in the 1990s, coupled with increased fondness for giant monsters, led a few folks to start a half-wrestling half-performance art group called Kaiju Big Battel. Here, people in giant costumes battle in a ring that is made to look like a city being rampaged. The good guys are all sorts of weird, while many, if not most, of the bad guys are experiments performed by former Nazi scientist Dr. Cube. The costume work is spectacular, and the comedy is great! Also, it introduced the concept of the Kaiju Regulatory Commission, which is something we need to make happen in the real toot-sweet! Truly, this is as science fictional as sport can get without motorcycles dragging rollerskaters around a track.

