

To this fan, Giamatti symbolized game of baseball

By CHRISTINA FROHOCK
Staff Writer

Last spring my father sent me a New York Times article announcing A. Bartlett Giamatti's ascension from president of Yale to commissioner of Baseball. My father, a professor and baseball disciple, included a post-it note reading: "Academic makes good — lucky bastard! Love, Dad."

I immediately called home to discuss the significance of this development in the baseball world. Dad and I shot back the usual questions: Was

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Giamatti qualified? Did he know baseball as we knew it? Could he handle the immensity and balance of the game? Did this man fully grasp the beauty of God's only perfect sport?

Yes, we finally agreed. We approved of the former Yale and hung up with the awareness that a new era in baseball

had begun.

Friday afternoon I stared in disbelief as a newscaster announced the "official death of A. Bartlett Giamatti, baseball commissioner." No, something wasn't right with this. Such a mortal concept as death had no place in the world of baseball. Celebrity deaths fail to affect me, but this was the loss of a fellow baseball lover. Something was definitely wrong.

Anyone raised on baseball as I was knows how the sport enters your soul and colors your summers with intelli-

gence and excitement. I remember Yankee Stadium in August. Hot dogs had been brewing since April and fans bought Cokes not to drink but to drench themselves. The boys of summer danced the field in one-on-one contests masked as team play.

I remember my dad explaining the metaphysical side of the game between innings to an attentive daughter. This is my baseball. I keep the game sacred by forgetting George Steinbrenner altogether, Joe DiMaggio's work as a Mr. Coffee spokesman, Thurman Munson's

plane crash and, someday, Giamatti's heart attack.

Giamatti believed in the integrity of the game and preserved it by banning Pete Rose for life from baseball for betting on major league baseball games. In an articulate speech, Giamatti re-established baseball as supreme over the players.

But I think of the former commissioner for more than the Rose incident. He brought a brilliance into the system and became the envy of every baseball-loving scholar in the universe. He skill-

fully merged the often polar worlds of academics and athletics. Giamatti symbolized my baseball.

The night he died I called home. Dad and I couldn't shoot the breeze like we normally did. Giamatti's death disturbed the magic we loved in baseball. Friday we were saddened by the loss of a friend and I suddenly felt old.

Later that evening I kept a promise and went to a late-night fraternity party. I sat on the front wall for about 20 minutes and then walked home. I was in no mood to fest. I wanted only to sleep and dream of my perfect game of baseball.

Good night, Mr. Giamatti. And thanks.

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Former Tar Heel needs your help

Any person with knowledge concerning the loss/theft of a 1981 Super Bowl ring belonging to former UNC and NFL football player Amos Lawrence is asked to contact the UNC sports information department at 962-2123 immediately.

Lawrence, who is taking classes at the University this fall, last had the ring in his possession in a restroom near his room in Craige Residence Hall.

Any information provided is strictly confidential and greatly appreciated.

Doctor sensed Giamatti's ill health

NEW YORK — The doctor was horrified by what he saw on the giant television screen. It was only a 10-second glimpse but it was enough for him to say, "Giamatti's dying."

Twelve days later, and a day after being told of the doctor's warning, baseball commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti died of a heart attack.

What Dr. William G. Cahan saw during a telecast of a Dodgers-Mets game was a telltale sign on Giamatti's right hand that could indicate a serious health problem. It is called clubbing of the fingernails.

"Giamatti's dying," Cahan was to tell a friend.

Cahan contacted Dr. Bobby Brown, the American League president and a cardiologist, and they agreed Cahan would send a letter to Brown suggesting he urge Giamatti to get a chest X-ray and to quit smoking.

Brown relayed the warning last Thursday. "He smiled that smile and told me it sounded like a good idea," Brown was quoted as saying by sports columnist Mike Lupica of the New York Daily News.

The next day, Giamatti suffered a fatal heart attack at his summer home on Martha's Vineyard. He was 51.

Big names among NFL cuts

Veteran kicker Chuck Nelson, who missed seven of nine field goal attempts in exhibition games, was one of 14 players cut by the Minnesota Vikings.

The Giants cut wide receivers Stacy Robinson and Phil McConkey, both of whom have been cut before and brought back. McConkey returned from Green Bay in 1986 in time to catch a touchdown pass in the Super Bowl.

Green Bay, starting almost from scratch, released quarterback Randy Wright and wide receivers Phillip Epps and Walter Stanley, a combination that started most of the team's games the past three years.

Detroit cut three players who started at least part-time last year — quarterback Rusty Hilger, wide receiver Pete Mandley and defensive back Devon Mitchell.

Chicago released four veteran backups, guard Kurt Becker, defensive lineman Sean Smith, center John Adickes and safety Toddy Krumm.

In addition to Cris Collinsworth and Jim Breech, Cincinnati released its third-round draft pick, Freddie Childress, a guard from Arkansas who reported to training camp at 379 pounds and weighed 340 when he was released.

Neal Olkewicz, who started 129 games at middle linebacker for Washington since 1979, was among 13 players waived by the Redskins.

The Los Angeles Raiders cut 13 players, including three former Pro Bowlers — cornerback Mike Haynes and linebackers Otis Wilson and Matt Millen — and former Chicago quarterback Vince Evans.

Timmy Smith, acquired as a free agent by San Diego in hopes the former Washington running back would duplicate his Super Bowl form, was cut along with 10 others by the Chargers.

In other NFL news, Tony Mandarich, who wanted to fight Mike Tyson, decided it might be safer on the football field and agreed to tentative contract terms with the Green Bay Packers.