

# A Slice of Life from the Butcher

## Baseball dream weavers don't detract from, but add to, the game

**Butch Maler**

*"It's every boy's dream to own a baseball team."*

—George Steinbrenner

Now before any of you all go off on me about the above gender-specific quote, please take it with a grain of salt. Mr. Steinbrenner simply failed to recognize that some women have such a dream. Likewise, some "boys" fail to realize said dream.

Not this boy, though.

From my first taste of a ballpark hot dog to the first time I got my hands on a bubble gum card wax pack to my premiere on the Little League circuit, I've fathomed furthering my involvement in baseball. And fantasy baseball fulfills such involvement for me.

Plainly put, I think fantasy baseball is the best thing since Big League Chew.

Introduced to "Rotisserie Baseball," a specific fantasy diamond game, back in the spring of 1989 by my buddy Tom Clark, I can't get enough of it. I've faced up to the fact—I'm hooked. Hello, my name is Butch Maler and I...I'm a Rotisseholic. It's been six months since my last player transaction.

I guess it'd help if I would explain myself and the object of my desire.

Rotisseball is a fantasy game where twelve franchises are run by everyday fans, who auction for, trade for or otherwise activate real-live baseball players—whose actual current statistics count towards the success (or failure) of the franchise that own them.

So if you somehow acquire Barry Bonds and he hits 30 homers while active on your team, you get those homers. The same goes for Barry's RBI's, stolen bases and batting average (it's nice to have Barry).

The pitching stats usually included in fantasy league play include wins, saves, ERA and a ratio of hits and walks per inning. Some leagues include runs for hitters and strikeouts for pitchers.

But before the stats come into

play, the most glorious Rotisseday of the year must come to pass—Auction Draft Day. Sometime during the weekend prior to Opening Day of the "real" baseball season, leagues tend to hold their draft.

Usually a drawn-out, all-day affair (worth every minute of it), the auction gives bloom to another fantasy season. Each franchise owner is allotted \$260 Rotissedollars to spend on 23 major leaguers (14 position players and nine pitchers).

That's the beauty of this game. It's not a dice-rollin', blind-guessin', idiot-winnin' thing. You actually become an owner, where you have tangible duties—such as managing a payroll, deciding which bum plays when and making trades for ballplayers (or even bigger bums).

After the auction, a reserve draft is held for major leaguers not taken, minor league prospects and, as one fantasy book put it, "the kid down the street with the promising arm."

The season is best spent with eyes fixed on ESPN's SportsCenter for all the latest baseball developments. You know, like if Eric Davis gets injured (surprise) or if you had three starting pitchers toting the hill in one evening.

As you can surmise, Rotisseball gets a little rough on the ol' pumper—the words "rotator" and "cuff" used in the same sentence can stop even the strongest of hearts and possibly ruin a fantasy season.

But through the injuries (I grimaced when Scott Erickson's sweet season soured in 1991 and Julio Franco went down in '92) and when player performance falls short of expectations and prognostications (when the Angels never scored enough to give Jim Abbott a chance), I've endured through four seasons of fantasy baseball.

Twice I've won the league; the other two years the league folded mid-season (including last season).

But I'm not folding. I live for this stuff. You can catch me watching the 7:00 p.m., 11:30 p.m. and 2:30 a.m. Sportscenters some days and nights over the summer. I'll buy *USA Today* and dissect the

major league notes. Don't try and stop me. There's nary a fantasy guide I won't purchase. I'm outta control.

So why? Why, why, why? What is it that so drives a post-pubescent male to such lengths for baseball stats? Info?

The dream. This is as close as I can possibly get to the real thing. It's like non-alcoholic beer. This isn't gambling. I don't play for money. Some do. For *thousands* of dollars.

I play for the thrill. That morning high of opening up the box scores to see what Ken Griffey, Jr. did at the plate (I can watch any number of highlight videos to see what he did in the field). The rush of calculating my team's stats against the rest of the league.

If I'm faltering, it's a challenge. Okay, what can I do to catch up? Who's gonna get hot? What rookie will be the September call-up that will push me to a pennant?

Hold on. Doesn't this nonsense take away from our national pastime in its purest form?

Some seriously question and criticize Rotisserie Baseball about distorting the Major League version. Besides, in fantasy ball, there's too much emphasis on offense; players become numbers; intra-league games become meaningless to these dream weavers.

I answer these notions with a resounding, "Not so!" I'm a die-hard Bucco's fan and I am able to separate my allegiances to the Pirates and my Nightmaier fantasy team. I'm sorry if others have a

problem with this.

And I'm sorry that many of you have not dipped your toes into the Rotisserie pool. Give it a chance and I believe you'll have a swimmingly good time. That is, unless you draft a bunch of injury-prone bums and finish in last.

But even in failure, there's a way to maintain interest. Put to-

gether a team newsletter wrought with trade talks and front office moves. Or just start preparing for the following Auction Draft Day.

There's always next year. Right? Well, you hope so. As for this year, I'm starting another fantasy league at Guilford and need 11 other franchise owners. Anyone interested?

### Sports Trivia

1. What was the first organized baseball team?
2. Who knocked out George Foreman in the eighth round of a 1974 bout to become the second ex-heavyweight to regain the title?
3. What was the first material used for the stringing on a tennis racket?
4. Who was the first black professional football player in the United States?
5. What former flame of tennis star Boris Becker won the gold medal in both the World Championships and Winter Olympics in 1984?

### Answers

1. The Knickerbocker Baseball Club (1845)
2. Muhammad Ali
3. Sheep's gut (introduced around 1500)
4. Charles Follet (started playing in 1904 for the Shelby [Ohio] Blues)
5. Katarina Witt—Germany (then, East Germany)

### Basketball Contest

## Can You Beat the Greek?

Test your NBA and college basketball prognosticating ability against Eric "the Greek" Pappas, unequivocally Guilford College's most knowledgeable sports mind.

Well, the Guilford community expressed its enthusiasm for the contest's change from NFL games to NBA and college basketball games by turning in an incredible five entries last week. So for old time's sake, this week's entry blank will include—besides nine NBA and college basketball games—the football game to end all football games, none other than the Super Bowl.

As for the results of last week's contest, "the Greek" turned in a lackluster performance, going 5-for-10 and losing to all other entrants. Cary Eddy demonstrated her prognosticating ability by going 8-for-10, and running away with the two dozen Krispy Kreme dough-

nuts just by filling out the entry blank and turning it in at the boxes located on the newsstands in the Founders lobby and in the Underground. **Deadline for entries is Sunday at noon.**



Photo by Carl Beehler

Pappas

| NBA  | Winners      |
|--|--------------|
| Game 1: L.A. Lakers @ Boston, Sunday       | _____        |
| Game 2: Chicago @ Utah, Monday             | _____        |
| Game 3: Golden State @ Milwaukee, Monday   | _____        |
| Game 4: Indiana @ Houston, Tuesday         | _____        |
| Game 5: New Jersey @ San Antonio, Tuesday  | _____        |
| NCAA                                       |              |
| Game 6: Georgia Tech @ Florida St., Sunday | _____        |
| Game 7: Michigan @ Iowa, Sunday            | _____        |
| Game 8: Purdue @ Ohio St., Wednesday       | _____        |
| Game 9: U.N.C. @ Duke, Wednesday           | _____        |
| The Super Bowl                             |              |
| Game 10: Dallas Cowboys vs. Buffalo Bills  | _____        |
| Tiebreaker: Total score of Super Bowl!     | _____ pts.   |
| Name: _____                                |              |
| Box Number: _____                          | Phone: _____ |



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