

Baseball is fun
Austin Kim, 5.21.20

Right now, we should be in the second month of the MLB season that was curtailed by the coronavirus, and we're itching to see our beloved Dodgers play again soon. But I couldn't agree more with what my fellow delivery boy said in his most recent [article](#). We as fans should NOT lobby for the MLB to start sooner than it should for the sake of bringing back what is fundamentally entertainment at the expense of the players' lives. They are people with spouses, elderly parents, and children. We must care for them not as players, but as people first.

With that made clear, Piazza Delivery Boys' stated mission is to share our love of the Dodgers with the rest of the world. But we understand not everyone is a Dodger fan. We also understand not everyone is a baseball fan. In fact, I've met countless people throughout the years that have dismissed baseball as unexciting and as the worst major sport to spectate. At first I'd get angry and defensive because they'd ignorantly devalue the game I love so much. But I learned in church to love my enemies, and so I resorted to praying for them, hoping they'd be able to discover the treasure that is baseball. So in addition to praying, I'm writing this article as a way to share not just the love of the Dodgers, but the love of the game. With no season going on, I thought it'd be the perfect time to address people who don't follow because they think it's boring. If I win anyone over, that will be my contribution to society. This one goes out to those who don't love baseball. So without further ado, let's jump into why baseball is one of the best sports to watch by debunking some popular myths spread by baseball haters.

Note: There is a difference between watching a game in person vs. on TV. This article is arguing that watching baseball on TV is enjoyable.

MYTH #1: There's barely anything going on. Sports like basketball have more exciting moments.

Most who claim this think the only exciting moments are when there's a home run or a spectacular web gem. While I don't disagree that homers and game-saving defensive plays are amazing to witness and they don't happen every play, I'd argue that basketball has a similar amount of WOW moments. The average spectator just doesn't realize it. In my opinion, the average spectator gravitates toward a sport like basketball over baseball because there's a lot more scoring and they're led to believe that there is more going on in general and hence, more exciting overall.

But just because there's more scoring doesn't automatically mean there's more going on. For much of a basketball game, one could argue it's not that "exciting" and actually repetitive until the last quarter or five minutes (if the game is even close). Furthermore, it's not every play where there's an emphatic dunk or a nasty crossover. Don't get me wrong, I love watching basketball as well, but basketball has more noise whereas baseball is more filtered down. One is not necessarily better than the other, but in terms of the amount of exciting moments, I'd argue they're similar.

Now, I know if you like basketball more, you're probably screaming at me saying that there's more to basketball than just scoring, dunks, and flashy plays. I want to say that I completely agree. There are coaching schemes, set plays, match-up exploitations, trash talk, and so much more. And the same case can be made for baseball. With every pitch in baseball, there is potential for a game-changing play, whether it be a walk that extends the inning for the offense and drags on the stress for the defense, a strikeout in a high leverage situation, a go-ahead home run, or a hit-robbing web gem. Every pitch has the potential to be a make or break moment in a game and with that comes added stress and anticipation as the game goes on if you're invested in either of the teams that are playing. Trust me, as fun as it is to watch the Dodgers, doing so has added more gray hairs to my head than anything else in my life. I wish I were joking, but I'm not... There is much more to look for than one might originally think, which leads me into debunking the next point.

Myth #2: Baseball is too simple and easy. It's just someone throwing to a guy trying to hit the ball with a stick. The only people that matter are the pitcher and batter. Everyone else on the field doesn't really do anything.

This is a gross oversimplification of what is actually going on before any given pitch.

Hitting a baseball is more complicated than just hitting a ball to score. It involves recognizing pitches, laying off of bad pitches, and developing a sense for the pitcher's routines and patterns. Oh, did I mention that it's scientifically impossible to hit a 95 MPH fastball? The average joe can probably learn to hit a jump shot or layup, but not everyone can hit a 95 MPH pitch (even by chance) because you have only 400 milliseconds to react. If you don't believe me, watch this video. If you do believe me, still watch it because it's cool.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RENLMum5wz4>

Baseball is easy? Yeah, I don't think so.

Pitching is much more than just throwing the ball as hard as you can. It involves actively communicating with the catcher on which pitch to throw, exploiting the current hitter's weaknesses, checking the runners on base, and mixing up pitches so as to not be predictable and give up a key hit or home run. Pitching is more about strategically attacking a hitter as opposed to the misconceived notion of simply trying to pitch in the strike zone every time and hoping the hitter misses. So yes, this implies that pitchers sometimes throw balls on purpose to get hitters to chase. Successful pitchers are best at changing locations and speeds of pitches on command. This is why even though former Dodger [Babe Ryu](#) (Hyun-Jin Ryu) didn't have the highest velocity on his fastball (~89-91 MPH), he was so effective because he had a change-up that was about 20 MPH slower than his fastball. Here's a video that can explain this concept better than I can featuring our beloved [Clayton Kershaw](#).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGo4wkPlszM>

Fielding either as an infielder or an outfielder involves a deep understanding of positioning, an ability to read the flight path of the baseball instantly off the bat, and cat-like reflexes as well as Hulk-like strength to execute amazing catches and throws. In between hitters, fielders are always changing their positioning based on the spray chart of the upcoming hitter (map of where the hitter is most likely to hit the ball based on previous at bats). Things are always shifting in between batters in the lineup and even in between individual pitches.

Managing also plays a huge part in the outcome of a game. Baseball games are a chess match played by opposing managers. Bullpen management, clubhouse culture, batting lineup, pinch hitting/running substitutions, baserunning decisions, and keeping the umpire in check are all responsibilities of the coaching staff. The outcome of a game is just as influenced by a manager as it is by the players. There's a reason why fans like Josh and myself did not take too kindly when Dave Roberts left Joe Kelly in the 2019 NLDS' Game 5. His pitch count was already up and he clearly lost command of all his pitches, but Roberts chose to keep him in. And... it proved to be the wrong decision :(Baseball is undoubtedly a game of athleticism, but it's also a war of intellect on the part of managers. There's a reason why the managers receive heaps of praise when they win a tough game and are the first to be scapegoated when the team loses. Here's 11-year Yankees manager Joe Girardi giving an inside scoop on what it's like to be a manager during a game to add to our appreciation of this part of baseball.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=up_GG9MgdAo

Another underrated role of a manager is to make sure his players don't get ejected from arguing a bad call. And that is how we all get the gift of epic managerial meltdowns.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afg46iTQhvc>

This is a 25 minute video compiled from just one season! I know it's a long video, but it's great content, so I hope you're able to watch the whole thing.

Closing arguments and suggestions

I hope I debunked some poorly constructed criticisms on the entertainment value of baseball. Baseball is indeed fun. And out of all major sports it truly is the one where it feels like the players are just kids in grown-up bodies. They are like little leaguers playing for the sheer enjoyment of the game. There's a reason why the mantra of baseball on all levels is "Let the kids play!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZfEv4JqxHQ>

All this said, I understand people's hesitation of following baseball religiously. There is a steep learning curve. There are so many players, minor league systems, multitude of drafts per year, and a bunch of stats that feel like a completely different language. And that's why I think the best way to cultivate an appreciation and enjoyment of baseball is by learning from another fan.

Just with any other hobby or pastime, the barrier of entry is lowered significantly by having someone else show you the ropes.

Honestly, I just vomited a lot of words because this is a sensitive topic for me. When someone says baseball sucks, a part of me just dies. So, as a last ditch effort to convince you that baseball is the bomb, here are a couple videos that I wanted to close this article with.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBYM-UDEG24>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAy3Sh_RXjc