

On Why I Didn't Watch the World Series This Year

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After a long lifetime of watching the World Series on television, this year (2021) it never crossed my mind. I asked myself why. This list is what I came up with for an answer. I'm going to assume that you are reasonably up on baseball, so I'll keep the explanations to a minimum.

- I didn't seem like a World Series, which has always meant a match-up of the best teams from the two major leagues based on their performance for the whole season. This wasn't that. The Atlanta Braves, one of the two teams, won 88 games over the length of the season, around twenty fewer than the San Francisco Giants and Los Angeles Dodgers in their National League. They were only four games over .500 at home. Houston, the other team, won fewer games than the Tampa Bay Rays in their American League. I get it that divisions and playoffs are good for business, but it takes the shine off the World Series for me. This was a Best Team at the End of the Season Series, and I couldn't get excited about that.

- I grant analytics help teams win games, but they hurt the game for the spectator. Vast numbers of strikeouts, infield shifts, a parade of relief pitchers, no bunts or stolen bases or hitting behind the runner, all-or-nothing, launch angle swings for the fences—no thanks.

- The games are snooze-inducing. Meandering (could the players go at their tasks any slower?), long commercial breaks, game-delaying replays. Anything over two hours 45 minutes is beyond my attention span, and these games run four hours.

- Iane, chatter-mouth announcers. Though that's no problem; I long ago muted the sound in all the sport exhibition shows.

- Pitchers have outpaced the game. It's estimated that Walter Johnson (reputed to have the fastest pitch in the 1920s) threw 89 (MPH). These days, starters bring it 96 and one-inning relievers 98-99. They are way bigger than Carl Erskine (a top pitcher years ago who was 5'10, 165) and can stride farther forward when pitching, thus be closer to the batter when they release of the ball. Yet it's still 60 feet six inches from the pitcher's mound to home plate. Hitters can't hit the ball successfully with any regularity these days; the pitcher-batter contest has gotten out of balance. Minuscule batting averages, the average length of time between balls being put in play has doubled. Nothing goes on.

- Players are way better than times past, but they don't seem like "us" to me. Jorge Soler, the MVP of this past Series, is a very fine player, but he isn't an American (he's from Cuba). Hank Aaron was us, but so many on these two teams are them. For me, it's like watching a British soccer match, just not my people, don't identify with them.

- With the current probing (or is it snoop) media, I'm privy to a lot of seediness that I wouldn't have learned about before—wife beating, rapes, debauchery, vulgarity, etc. In this Series, the idea of watching Houston players who a couple of years ago got caught blatantly cheating was a strong disincentive for me.

- The sport world in general doesn't take to people like me (white, "unwoke"). National anthem protests, America bashing, racism accusations, etc. If they don't like and respect people of my sort, which is their right, it makes sense for me to spend my time with people who do, which is my right.

- I've outgrown sport shows. Watching someone hit a ball with a piece of wood and run to first base did it for me when I was twelve, even twenty-five. But now it seems pointless if not outright silly;

cheapjack entertainment. During game seven of the Series, I read Blake Bailey's new biography of Philip Roth the writer. It was a more satisfying, rewarding, use of my time at this stage of my life than watching images on a television screen of strangers (many of them from other countries) playing with a ball (in slow motion) along with a hundred beer and car commercials.