

It Ain't Right

Major League Baseball allegedly opened its season Wednesday night with a game between the Cubs and Mets. I say allegedly because the game was played in Japan. Now, last I heard, Japan didn't have any Major League Baseball teams. The only reason to move the opening game there was to make a fast buck. That ain't right, an assertion that no one can dispute. I'm willing to bet that no one not on MLB's payroll will make an honest effort to try.

What's entertaining about the opening day¹ fiasco is that I heard people actually trying to create reasoned arguments why playing the first regular season game (and in my opinion *any* regular season MLB game) outside a MLB home city was wrong. This is an intellectual fallacy. The traditions of baseball are a matter of faith and must be treated that way.

There aren't many articles of faith left in baseball today, and I think it's one of the reasons that the game is supposedly losing its fan base. Many parts of baseball aren't supposed to make sense, but they shouldn't be trifled with, either. The archaic nature of baseball gives it its majesty. Playing Handel's *Messiah* on the electric guitar fundamentally changes it. Selling Major League game sites to the highest bidder does, too.

That doesn't mean that baseball should stand still of course. I think that gloves were a welcome addition to the game, as well as some minimal standards in playing field size. I'm even willing to grudgingly admit that adding another division to let more cities in the game is a good thing. That does add wildcards to the playoffs, and I had hoped that baseball's strong anti-gambling stance would at least change the name of the unseemly extra invitee to the post-season cotillion.

But at its heart, baseball is a religious endeavour, and like all religions, resists frivolous change. The Designated Hitter rule isn't just another way to play, it's a Royal Divorce or 99 Theses; it's a statement of profound disagreement with an accepted tenet of the universe.² And, like other religious differences, all one can really say is "that ain't right."

Opening the season outside a team's home park ain't right.

¹ Opening Days that ain't right don't get capital letters.

² There are people who would say the same thing about artificial turf; they're wrong. Artificial turf is not a principled schism, but a guitar Mass. It's embarrassing and undignified, but it doesn't change the basic tenets of faith.