

## ONE BIKE, THIRTY BALLPARKS

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How humiliating. I had been corrected by an Angels' fan.

*Grade:* A-

*Notes:* The monkey cost them a straight A.

## JUNE 2 MILWAUKEE AT LA DODGERS

Dodger fans treat a baseball ticket like an invitation to a party. They show up fashionably late and they leave early — unless it turns out to be a real wild bash.

The Dodgers were kind enough to acknowledge my quixotic attempt to ride a bicycle to all the ballparks by making a pre-game announcement while I stood on the field. This was a great honor, and certainly the only way I could ever weasel my way onto a Major League diamond. Still, it was a bit of a disappointment that only about 2,000 were in the park at the time.

After waving to each fan individually, I joined a group of season ticket-holders in their seats behind the right-field fence. They were all from Milwaukee. It seemed an odd coincidence that I would find the four Brewers fans in LA on the night their team was in town. My opportunity to mingle with the Dodger crowd slowly slipped away, as did my ability to follow the game, thanks to all the beers they bought me.

By the eighth inning, I had entered a number of questionable scoring entries, such as “?-3” and “F?” before giving up.

The whole place got serious, though, with two outs in the bottom of the eighth. With the Dodgers up by four runs, Jim Tracy sent Gagne in to grab an easy save. LA loves their stars, and Gagne is the hottest one around, despite his odd



COURTESY OF CHARLIE HAMILTON

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appearance. In response, the crowd came to life. It was unnerving to see this mellow crowd go so bananas.

Gagne nailed the game down, and the fans returned to normal. The show was over, with the predictable happy ending. No one bothered to argue with me as I burped “cheap save” on the way out.

*Grade:* B-

*Notes:* Taking a cue from today's self-obsessed athlete, I deducted a half grade because not enough fans were on hand to applaud my introduction.

## JUNE 9 CINCINNATI AT OAKLAND

The last time I visited Network Associated Coliseum, it was the late nineties and Pedro Martinez was in his prime. He shut down the A's, inciting their fans to frustrated rage, which they took out on the many Boston fans who were present. This made me think that they were a pretty good lot.

Five years later, apparently, all these fans were gone. I couldn't even pick a fight.

This didn't look like a

baseball crowd. Clothed in an equal mix of A's, Raiders, and Harley Davidson logos, they seemed to lack focus. My theory was that they were all stoned.

The game exploded into a 17-8 slugfest, with the home team battering the visiting Reds to the tune of 22 hits and a grand slam. In the middle of this scoring orgy, the “Dot Race” popped up on the Jumbotron. This whimsical contest (supposedly invented here) features three colored circles careening around a track, jockeying for position as the finish line approached. It is so popular that a number of websites discuss statistic-inspired betting strategies.

The Dot Race got a bigger ovation than the grand slam. If the A's win, I guess, so much the better.

*Grade:* Incomplete

*Notes:* What this crowd of Jeff Spicolis needs is a Mr. Hand to interrupt their prom night to lecture them on baseball. “So, like, when those dudes in Atlanta don't show up for playoff games, they're bogus. And if we don't show up for, like, our first-place team, then we're bogus, too!”

*Next: across the bay to San Francisco, up the coast to Seattle, and over the mountains to Colorado.*

