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Women: Indisputable Fans of Baseball: An Ethnographic Study of Female Baseball Fans

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WOMEN: INDISPUTABLE FANS OF BASEBALL

An Ethnographic Study of Female Baseball Fans

By

Shea Barickman

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
Honors in the Department of Anthropology

UNION COLLEGE
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ABSTRACT

Shea Barickman THE REAL FANS OF BASEBALL: An Ethnographic Study of Female Baseball Fans. Department of Anthropology, November 2015.

Baseball is known as America's Pastime and has been a strong symbol of masculinity in American culture. The ratio of female to male fans, however, is actually the most equal of any major professional sport in the United States. This thesis examines that paradox. Drawing on participant observations at games, interviews with fans and an ethnographic study of a sports radio station in Kansas City, I find that the increasing participation of female fans is a result of baseball being experienced and marketed as a family-oriented game. This family experience gave women a point of entry and women have stuck around ever since. In the process, women have become genuine fans and are increasingly involved in running the game itself.

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PREFACE

“Well, do you know their batting order?” This was the typical response I received growing up whenever I told boys in my school that I loved baseball, and in particular the Kansas City Royals. Most boys would stand with their mouths open because they could not believe I was a girl and I actually could name the starting batting order, which Royals had made it to the Hall of Fame (only one, George Brett), and argue controversial issues that were happening in baseball at the time. It had always been this way.

Baseball has perpetually been a huge part of my family. For as long as I can remember the Kansas City Royals have been in my life. I was fortunate enough to grow up visiting my dad’s hometown of Kansas City regularly where his mother, brothers, sisters and their families still live. My childhood was filled with stories of the glory days, when the Royals were top contenders in the American League and tales about “Uncle Ewing” (my grandfather’s close friend and former owner of the Royals, Ewing Kauffman). Then there was my favorite story, when my dad went to six out of seven of the 1985 World Series games—the year the Royals finally won it all and the last time the Royals would be in the playoffs for twenty-nine years until 2014. In 2015 when the Royals played the New York Mets in the World Series I was given the privilege to go to Game Four with my dad. It was an experience I will never forget, especially because the Royals went on to win their second World Series the next day.

I have often wondered whether I was the anomaly or the trend. There is a picture of me, when I was about seven years old, standing in front of the George Brett statue outside of Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City. There I am holding one of the small

wooden bats that you can get at a game. I possess an intense glare in my eyes and stand as if I am waiting for a pitch to knock out of the park with two strikes and two outs. That picture is my earliest memory when it comes to baseball. I wanted to find out other women's.



INTRODUCTION

Most people do not know the song everyone sings during the seventh inning stretch, “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” was actually written about a woman who was madly in love with baseball. The song, written by Jack Norworth in 1908, actually starts out with “Katie Casey was base ball mad. Had the fever and had it bad;” the song continues to relay the story of her “beau” asking her to go to a show and she pleases no, “Take me out to the ballgame...”¹

Baseball, compared to other major league sports, has the most gender-even fan base. Basketball and football, for example, both have closer to 70 percent male and 30 percent female fans. While in baseball, women make up a little less than fifty percent of the fans and men make up a little more than fifty. The number fluctuates from team to team but some are as close as 45 percent of fans are female and 55 percent are male, like the Texas Rangers.² No other major sport is that balanced. I wanted to know why. When I went to look up research on female fans today I found very little because there is virtually no literature on it, this thesis helps to fill the gap.

This study’s aim was to not only discover why baseball is so appealing to female fans, but also to highlight that women are real fans of the sport. Baseball is more than a symbol of masculinity but truly America’s national pastime, appealing to men and women alike.

¹ Ardell, Jean, *Breaking into Baseball*

² Numbers taken from Klear, a social intelligence platform that did an online study <http://blog.fanzeal.com/these-top-10-teams-have-mlb-baseballs-most-social-fan-base/>
Accessed Nov 1

Methodology

I spent the summer of 2015 living in Kansas City, Missouri. While there I recorded field notes at various locations, focusing on Kauffman Stadium. I attended seven games in which I conducted notes. At the games I interviewed female fans, as well as observed their actions. I spoke with five fans in total at the games. I tried to pick fans randomly and in different sections of the stadium where the ticket prices varied. I interviewed two from the upper deck, two from the middle sections, and one from the field-level seats. I spoke to female fans of all ages, from young girls to elderly.

I also got in touch with the Kansas City Royals' Front Office and interviewed their Head of Marketing and Advertising about the team's strategies for marketing to women. In addition, I had an internship at a sport's radio network in Kansas City and took field notes during my time there.

I chose Kansas City to conduct research because I had access to the city (my family is from there) and Kansas City is a major baseball town. The Royals had recently made a push in the postseason and advanced all the way to the World Series the fall before. While I was performing my research the Royals were in first place in their division. Therefore, I knew the games would be well attended. I also knew from past visits that the people in Kansas City are very friendly and would be willing to speak with me.

I did not, however, just want the point of view of female Kansas City Royals fans because that would not give me a good survey of female fans in general. When I got back

to the East Coast at the end of the summer I continued my research and interviewed female fans of teams there. I interviewed women from Union College who were fans and they, in turn, put me into contact with more and more fans. Altogether, I interviewed twelve fans and two men who worked in the front offices of the Royals and the Texas Rangers.

I had a list of basic questions to ask each fan with the aim of finding out why and how they became a fan, how they felt about the way baseball markets to women, and what their favorite part of the sport was. However, because the interviews were not formal I carried the conversation in different directions depending each fan's responses. Each conversation was recorded and I then later transcribed them. In the end, I had enough material that I felt I could make a conclusion about my findings.

Each chapter in this thesis has a specific purpose. The first chapter is an overview of the history of baseball. Baseball has been around in the United States for hundreds of years, although the game has evolved since its earliest days. It is important to understand where baseball started and how much it has changed in order to comprehend female fans' role in the sport today. The second chapter examines the crucial role that family has played in creating women as baseball fans. The third chapter assesses how female fans are marketed to in baseball. This chapter also evaluates the success Major League Baseball has had marketing to their female demographic and the challenges the sport may face in attracting those fans. The fourth chapter illustrates women as real fans of the sport. It examines fans' answers to why they love baseball. Finally, the last chapter explores the advances that women have made in decision-making positions within professional baseball organizations.

LIT REVIEW

Although it is important to examine any previously published literature on women as baseball fans, I found few sources pertinent to the topic. Thus, I will take a broader focus in this section with an overview of the different theories about gender and sport and finally, narrow it down to the literature of--or lack of--women as fans of baseball today.

Gender and Sports

The role gender has played in sports has been studied for decades and feminist theories have been applied to sports. Most work on the topic of gender and sport, however, has been done on the male role in sport and the masculine identity. Two authors that are most well known for their research in this area of study are Michael Messner and Donald Sabo. Both authors have written numerous books on the male identity in the sporting world. Sabo along with Russ Runfola published one of the first texts about male masculinity related to sports in their book entitled *Jock: sports & male identity*. Sabo and Runfola saw sport as an outlet and place for male behavior to grow (Sabo and Runfola, 1980), something that has been seen in baseball for decades, as well.

Feminist Theories and Sport

Overtime, however, this definition of sport as a masculine outlet has begun to change with the feminist movement and with Title IX. There are many different types of

feminist theories and these theories can be applied to an outlook on sports and gender in sports. There are three main types of feminist theories that are discussed in terms of sport. There is the liberal feminist, the radical feminist, and the socialist feminist viewpoints.

At the heart of liberal feminism is the concept that sports have qualities that are fundamentally sound and provide a positive impact on the lives of women and girls (Flintoff and Scranton, 2013). It is well known that girls are filtered into mainly feminine activities like dance and gymnastics, while boys are filtered into masculine activities like football and basketball. This is obvious when looking at softball versus baseball and girls being pushed into playing softball instead of baseball.

Many liberal feminists focus on the underrepresentation of women in high-power positions with decision-making abilities in sports or coaching and leadership positions. These particular feminists are important and remembered for their rejection of women's inferiority in sport due to physical capability (Flintoff and Scranton, 2013). For example, many liberal feminists felt that the 2012 London Summer Olympics were the most "female-friendly." This was because every team had at least one woman on it and women were now taking part in previously male only sports like boxing. However, women still lagged behind in decision-making positions. Only 21 out of 101 members of the International Olympic Committee were female, which reflects on women as a whole on sports' decision-making positions. Later in this thesis, we will examine how baseball is evolving faster than other sports to include more women in decision-making positions.

The radical feminists believe that male and female inequalities are connected to structural power. They view society as patriarchal and men dominating as a group over women as a whole (Flintoff and Scranton, 2013). Radical feminists try to combat this

tradition in sports by celebrating women's values in women only events. This is a method that causes separation of the sexes. While liberal feminists are interested in creating parity for women in decision-making positions, radical feminists are focused on the power maintained by men over women and interested in the way sports play into male sexual dominance and female submission (Flintoff and Scranton, 2013). Radical feminists want to separate the sexes instead of integrate them.

Finally, the third theory of feminism is of the socialist feminist. Socialist feminists have very similar views to radical feminists. They believe there is gender inequality as well, but think it is due to capitalism, class, and economic exploitation, combining the ideas of radical feminists and Marxists. Socialist feminism centers on the different roles women play in servicing men and children's athletics (Flintoff and Scranton, 2013). Women play the supportive role of driving their children to games or practice, washing their uniforms, cheering their male partners on in men's sports, serving refreshments, etc.

Certain baseball teams, like the New York Yankees and New York Mets, used to have "Ladies' Day". This was a day when women could go to a game for a discount, or even free, admissions fee. During the 1970s, when the feminist movement and Title IX was in full swing, a man demanded that he too got a discounted ticket "arguing that it was reverse discrimination to economically favor women fans." The New York Human Rights Commission agreed and in 1973 barred New York teams from furthering the practice. Feminists of all kinds sided with the man saying "if women want equal pay in order to make their own way in society, they should pay the same price as men" (Ardell, 2005).

In baseball, a fan is a supportive role. However, in literature women and men fans are not always treated in the same supportive role. While they may pay the same price for a ticket, the literature about gender and sports in general discusses women as participants, not as fans. Although being a sports fan, as opposed to actually playing a sport, is a supportive role, it is vital to professional sports; without fans, teams could not afford to operate. Despite the number of women who love sports, they are not respected as much as male fans, just as their participation is undervalued.

Gender and Sport in the Media

These inequalities the theories point out between women and men in sports are reflected in the underrepresentation of women's sports in the media.

Messner, who writes extensively on masculinity and sports, also has done a vast amount of research on gender in media coverage of sports. Messner published his research in a study called "Gender in Televised Sports" with Cheryl Cooky. The study spans the years 1989-2009. The study focused on the inequality in news reporting of female sports versus male sports. Inevitably, they found that although over the years laws have changed, such as the implementation of Title IX in order to address inequality between the sexes in sports, other social practices in society, like media coverage, have not changed.

The study's main goal was to compare and contrast the amount and quality of coverage on televised news of male versus female sporting events. Messner and Cooky did this by analyzing three, two-week segments from three different local Los Angeles television stations (KNBC, KABC, and KCBS). They also examined ESPN's *Sports*

Center to look at the highlight reels from each 11:00pm program. They found that although between 1993 and 1999 women's sports coverage increased to the highest it had ever been. By 2009 it had decreased to 1.6% of the airtime, which was the lowest in two decades. Over the two decades the local stations coverage of women's sports were consistent with each other. However, KNBC had the highest women's coverage in 2004 at 8.9% but by 2009 had 1.1 %, less coverage than the other two stations that had around 2% of coverage of women's sports (Cooky and Messner, 2010). Although coverage of women's sports in the media had increased altogether during that time frame, it was not nearly equal to the coverage men's sports were getting. Messner and Cooky also briefly touched upon the underrepresentation of women commentators and reporters.

It is easy to see the inequality of men and women in sports through media based on airtime of male sports versus female sports. This shows that women's position as an athlete in sports contains obvious discrimination of female athletes versus male athletes in the media. This discrimination is represented in the way female athletes are spoken about by commentators using derogatory terms or just the amount of airtime coverage of women's sports.

This summer I saw the sexism first hand on the air. The sports radio station I worked for had a daily morning weekday program. On one particular day the two men on the show were discussing the United States Women's National Soccer Team's win the night before in the World Cup. The men were referencing Megan Rapinoe, who scored twice, in their 3-1 win against Australia. One of the men could simply not get Megan Rapinoe's last name pronunciation right. He eventually, called her "Megan Whatever"

when speaking about the star player. These men would have written off a male athlete's last name like that.

It is not only with the female athlete that it occurs, but also with female reporters. There is sexism and clear objectification of women in female reporting positions that does not occur for men. This ranges from sexual harassment by athletes to female reporters in the locker room, to common conversations by viewers about the reporter. I saw it occur blatantly again this summer when watching the MLB All-Star Game with my coworkers. We were watching Heidi Watney, a reporter for MLB Network, interview Troy Tulowitzsky, a member of the Colorado Rockies at the time. The two male coworkers I was with said that she looked good and therefore could keep talking. This was something they would never have said about a male reporter. There needs to be a change in conversation about women, whether it is about a female athlete, reporter, or fan.

Characterizations of Female Fans

Baseball, also known as America's national pastime, has been known for its masculine identity. It is a sport that was created by men and played mostly by men. Ten years ago 37 percent of women self-identified as baseball fans, compared to 49 percent of men. Today, however, women make up 45 percent of all baseball fans (Thomas, 2010). So why is it in a male dominated sport, that has been the image of America's masculinity since its creation, do females make up almost half of baseball fans? To understand this it is important to know how female baseball fans have been characterized.

“Groupie”

A position women have in baseball that has been studied is as a “groupie,” one of the many negative labels a female fan can be mistakenly called. While men are fans, some women have been mistakenly categorized as groupies. The ethnography, “Groupies and American Baseball” by George Gmelch, interviews women who are viewed as going to the ballpark to not watch the games, but instead going to pick up baseball players.

Motives of baseball groupies vary but most are for the excitement of being with a baseball player. Baseball players, when asked why groupies seek them out say it is for their physical appeal, money and prestige, all seen as very masculine traits (Gmelch and San Antonio, 1998). The position of a baseball groupie represents what radical feminist view of sports and gender. Radical feminists focus on the sexual dominance of men and the submission of women within sports (Flintoff and Scranton, 2013). Although there are women, especially in the minor leagues, who attend baseball for the men, it is not near the majority. It is important to cast that stereotype aside when looking at female fans and break through it.

There are female fans of baseball that are not “groupies.” These real fans of the sport have been incorrectly marked as these women. The research I have done will help to prove that female fans of the sport are not there because they would like to marry a baseball player and will break this popular stereotype of women.

The Female Fan in Current Literature

When one Googles “female fans in baseball” the first handful of searches to come up include “Who Has the Foxiest Fans?” or “20 Hottest Photos of Baseball Fans,” and

other articles along those lines. One is hard pressed to find an article on female fans that does not comment on their looks. Yet, the 45 percent of baseball fans that are women most likely do not like baseball because they look good in a baseball cap.

Although there is a history of women at the ballpark, which will be discussed in the following chapter, mainly written by Jean Ardell in her book *Breaking into Baseball: Women and the National Pastime*, there is absence of work on what the real female baseball fan is like today and why she is a fan.

The historian, Doris Kearns Goodwin, wrote a memoir called *Wait Till Next Year*. It speaks about her special relationship with the Brooklyn Dodgers and her love for baseball because of the unique relationship it created with her father. While this is a great account of her life and what it means to her to be a baseball fan, it does not cast an overview of female fans today.

Women make up such a big proportion of baseball fans today that it is vital to understand why. Why do women watch a sport that has been seen for centuries as America's pastime but at the same time a symbol for American masculinity? In what way are female fans marketed to and how do women feel about the sexualizing of them in advertising? It is my goal to answer these questions and to fill the gap in information about female fans of baseball, and to, hopefully, change the stereotype that women only watch baseball because they think the players look good in their uniforms.

Chapter One

HISTORY OF BASEBALL

In order to understand why baseball attracts such a large female demographic it is important to recognize baseball's origins and the role women have played.

The game of baseball that is played today took centuries to develop. Throughout this slow evolution baseball has, from the very beginning, been dubbed "America's pastime." Baseball started informally and was played in various different forms until 1845, when the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club was created in New York City. It was only eleven short years later, in 1856, that the *New York Mercury* christened baseball as America's pastime (Alexander, 2013).

Baseball did not have organized play and official rules between clubs until 1857, when fourteen New York area clubs came together to create uniforms and to establish a set model of rules based on the Knickerbocker version. From then on everything continued to move very slowly. The first fully professional team was not launched until twelve years later, in 1869. This team was the Cincinnati Red Sox (now known as the Cincinnati Reds; the name was shortened in the 1890s). The first World Series between the American League and the National League did not occur until 1903, when the Boston Americans defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates. The current structure of the American and National League divisions was not finalized until 1994, creating three divisions for each league (East, West, and Central). Interleague play between the two leagues and three divisions did not start until 1997.

Even the way the game is played today took centuries to formulate. Some of the most basic parts of the way the game is played were not established until forty years after the creation of the official game; aspects of the game like pitching the ball to the batter overhand was not legal until 1885. The first baseball game was not broadcasted on the radio until 1921 and the first World Series game was not televised nationwide until 1951 (1953 was the start of the “game of the week” when one game was broadcasted nationally each week). Baseball has also fostered a very lucrative marketing system from the very beginning. Tobacco companies started putting cards with the athletes on them in their products in the 1880s, originating the baseball card. Today, millions of dollars are made through endorsements and advertising in baseball, especially in the larger cities like New York and Los Angeles.

Not only has baseball been slow to develop structurally, it also has been slow to develop socially. In the earliest days baseball was strictly a white sport. In 1920, seventy-five years after the formation of the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, African Americans could finally play baseball professionally, but separately than the white Americans, in the Negro League. Baseball was not integrated until Branch Rickey, the General Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, (—who is credited with starting the first farm team system during his time with the St. Louis Cardinals) signed Jackie Robinson in 1945.

Baseball’s history has been far from perfect, as well. Besides not allowing blacks to play until the 1920s as well as not integrating the league until the 1940s, women have been virtually absent from baseball except for the brief appearance of the All-American Girls Baseball League, during World War II. There have also been many scandals—even from the beginning. In the 1919 World Series, eight players on the Chicago White Sox

were accused and eventually found guilty of throwing the game for money. This created the infamous nickname for them, “the Chicago Black Sox”. In 1989, Pete Rose was banned from baseball for life because of issues with betting, which is illegal for members of a baseball team to participate in. Today, baseball is in the shadow of the steroid era. Many players have been found guilty of using performance enhancing drugs, or PEDs. This has tainted the records of many baseball players, including Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, and Mark McGuire. It has also barred them from being inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame (Cassuto and Partridge, 2011).

Baseball’s long and complicated history is vital to understanding how gender has played a role in the sport. Although it is traditionally a man’s game and paints the American picture of masculinity, it has not been untouched by female hands.

Women at the Plate

Women have fought long and hard to get their chance to stand at bat in baseball. Since the creation of baseball it has been the view of many men that women do not belong in baseball. Albert G. Spalding, a professional baseball player in the 1870s who went on to create the Spalding sports equipment empire, once wrote in his baseball guide that baseball was “too strenuous for women” (Gregorich, 1993). However, that did not stop them.

It was not long after the Knickerbockers started baseball when women joined in too. In the following years women became more serious about baseball. This was when “the Bloomer Girls” were established. These were semi-professional girls teams that started in the 1890s. They had no formal league but came together to play a sport they

wanted to play. They got their name from Amelia Bloomer, who designed and played in a loose Turkish trouser that became their uniform. In 1920, the Bloomer Girls became even more serious with teams like the All-Star Athletic Girls and the New York Bloomer Girls. Men's professional baseball adopted some of the practices of the Bloomer Girls, most notably night games. Men's professional baseball had become so lucrative that they started to have night games, something that the league had refused to do every decade before. They introduced night games in 1935; the Bloomer Girls had been conducting night games since 1930 (Gregorich, 1993).

There was no doubt that some of these girls could compete with the boys. One girl in particular was Jackie Mitchell. In 1931, she pitched an exhibition game against the New York Yankees and struck out both Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig. Babe Ruth was quoted saying this before the game: "I don't know what's going to happen if they begin to let women in baseball. Of course, they will never make good. Why? Because they are too delicate. It would kill them to play ball every day." A few days after, the Commissioner of Baseball Kenesaw Mountain Landis, voided Mitchell's contract with the minor league team she signed with and said women were too unfit to play baseball (Fields, 2008).

The Bloomer Girls declined and eventually died out due to Branch Rickey's farm system, as mention before. This was because fans started going to minor league games and the Bloomer Girls could not compete. However, in 1943, Philip K. Wrigley financed the All-American Girls Baseball League. This was a way to keep fans interested in baseball while the male players were over-seas during World War II. The league lasted only twelve seasons. It eventually folded in 1954. After the men returned, fans no longer wanted to see women play. The league lasted twelve seasons. This was the only time

women were finically supported by Major League Baseball to play professional baseball. The league, however, made an important statement for women. Barbara Gregorich said it best in her book *Women at Play*:

For those who actually saw them play, the women of the AAGBL changed forever the unquestioned concept that women cannot play baseball. For their managers, they played that national pastime as only professionals can. The ballplayers of the AAGBL were greater than the forces that produced them. They were equal to the game...more serious than the skirts they were required to wear...

The All-American Girls Baseball League proved women could play baseball and play it well, even though men would stop them.

They could not play with the men at the clubs, but could play through the one thing women had fought for already, education. Vassar College, in 1966, created a women's baseball team called the Resolutes (interestingly enough, Vassar today does not have a women's baseball team or a softball team). Vassar, along with other women's colleges, Smith and Wesley, had baseball teams for their collegiate women (Cohen, 2009).

The last attempt to establish a female presence in professional baseball occurred in 1994, with the creation of the Colorado Silver Bullets. It was much like the Bloomer Girl teams but—it had no league to play in and only lasted four seasons.

Women Upstairs

Today, there are very few women who play baseball but there are many women in the front office and part of the baseball organization, which will be examined later in this thesis. Throughout most of the sport's history, only women with family connections or who inherited teams were involved with its administration. The first woman to actually own a major league baseball team, Helene Hathaway Robinson Britton, owned the St. Louis Cardinals, came into control of the team after her uncle died and left it to her in 1911 (Ardell, 2005).

Money would not even allow women to get their foot in the door of the baseball world. The Brooklyn Dodgers moved to California from New York in 1957 despite the plea of their fans. One of these fans was an extremely wealthy widower named Dorothy Johnson Killam. Killam endeavored to buy the Brooklyn Dodgers for six million dollars (roughly 51 million dollars today). Her offer was rejected and "she died in 1965, an aspiring owner whose wealth could not gain her that distinction" (Ardell, 2005). All the money in the world at that time could not even buy a woman a team.

Margaret Donahue was the first woman to work in baseball's front office. She was hired in 1919 as a stenographer for the Chicago Cubs; by 1926 she was the league's first female corporate secretary. She made important and profitable advancements for baseball, "Donahue instituted the sale of season tickets and the promotion of Ladies' Day at Wrigley Field" (Ardell, 2005).

In the Stands

Women were not always welcomed at every game in baseball. In the beginning, women could only attend on the Knickerbockers' Women's Day. This was a day in which the men could invite women to watch the games. Soon baseball became popular among average Americans and the baseball obsession spread to women, as well. Not only was it seen a nuisance at the time to have women in the stands because it inhibited men from drinking and swearing as much as they wanted, but also a disruption "because they were seen as naturally and irredeemably ignorant of baseball fundamentals" (Ardell, 2005). However, this did not stop the teams from giving women admissions. The professional teams wanted to fill the stands with people who would consume the products at the games. Some teams hosted "Ladies' Days," starting as early as 1883. The New Orleans Pelicans, when in financial trouble, opened the ballpark one day a week to unescorted women in 1887, eight-hundred women showed up (Ardell, 2005).

In the 1920s, when women gained the right to vote they also gained more freedoms and became a new kind of fan. Jack Norworth, in 1927, changed the lyrics in his song to represent this. Now "Take Me Out to the Ball Park" told the story of Nelly Kelly. Instead of a plea to go to the ballpark, it was a demand. Just like women's demand for equal rights (Ardell, 2005).

In the 1970s, when Title IX came out, the way women thought of themselves as fans changed. It was now more acceptable to be a woman who participates in sports, as well as to be competitive. Women were becoming serious fans and it was after the 1970s that more and more women showed up to the ballpark. By 1980, many ball clubs, such as the Yankees and the White Sox doubled their female fan numbers (Ardell, 2005). The

fandom continued to go up, until today when female fans make up almost half of all baseball fans.

It is important to look at baseball's past and women's position in it to see how far the sport has come today. Women in the past have not always been welcomed in baseball, but today their presence is vital to teams at the ballpark.

Chapter Two

FAMILY

Baseball has always been known as our national pastime. Throughout its history, a baseball game has been considered not just a sporting event, but a patriotic celebration. Today, although baseball is surpassed in popularity by football and other sports, it is still known as America's pastime. Even though baseball has been seen as a symbol of masculinity, a sport played by most men at some point in their lives, and for a long time viewed by men only, it is now synonymous with family.

For many fans their interest in the sport started with family. Families have felt welcomed at the ballpark because the sport itself is less violent than others like football and the environment the games are played in is family-friendly.

Memories Rooted in Family

Joanne to Joanna

Joanna Chalifoux told me she has always loved baseball—for as long as she can remember. Joanna is a twenty-one-year-old New York Mets fan. The love of baseball in her family did not start with her, but with her grandmother who passed it on to Joanna's father Rick. The passion for baseball went through Joanna's entire family tree.

Joanna's grandmother, Joanne, grew up in Chicago as a Chicago Cubs fan. She became a fan because her father was such an avid Cubs fan. "One of my earliest memories of baseball is of my dad listening to the Cubs-Tigers World Series games on the radio. No television then!" she told me. This was the 1935 World Series when the

Chicago Cubs lost to the Detroit Tigers. (The last time the Cubs won the World Series was in 1908!)

“My father would listen to the Cubs games wherever he was—in the house, in the car, even at the mall with his little portable radio while my mother shopped,” Joanne explained. She also grew up with three brothers. All her brothers played baseball and she played softball in high school; she was surrounded by the sport. From there it stuck. “My friend Nancy and I went to many Cubs games while in high school. We would take the streetcar and bus to Wrigley Field. We were even at the game when Hank Sauer hit three home runs. That was a thrill!” Her father shared a love of baseball with her family and Joanne shared it when she had a family of her own.



³ This is a picture of Joanna and her father Rick at Game 5 of the 2015 World Series.

Joanne had six sons; one of them was Joanna's father Rick. "As soon as they could hold a baseball bat I would pitch to them in the backyard. I'd pitch and say, 'swing' at the appropriate time. We had a big backyard and when the boys got older, I would self-pitch and hit balls for them to catch," reminisced Joanne. They moved to Long Island in the 1960s, right around the time the New York Mets franchise was established. The family became loyal Mets fans. Then Rick continued the tradition of baseball with his family and now Joanna, is a huge New York Mets fan because of her father. During the 2015 World Series, when the Mets played the Royals, Joanna and her whole family, including her grandmother, had a huge on-going group text thread about the games.

I asked Joanne why she thought baseball was so appealing to female fans and she told me because "baseball is a sport that seems to have a universal appeal. It can be played by all ages and both sexes. It is not expensive and can be played almost anywhere there is enough room...it can be enjoyed by the whole family as a unit. Going to a baseball game can be like going on a picnic, a family outing." Interest in baseball starts with the family.

Claudia to Janine (and Ali)

Claudia Cerutti is the wife of former Blue Jays pitcher and commentator John Cerutti. Together Claudia and John raised a family and at one point their family's life revolved around baseball. However, Claudia's interest in baseball did not start with her husband, but before that, with her father.

Claudia's father had grown up in the Bronx and played baseball in high school and it was a big part of his life. "I learned about baseball from him," she said. Then

Claudia herself played softball during everyday of elementary school. “So I always knew it and understood the game,” she explained. Claudia married John after they met in college. John and she started a family once John reached the Major Leagues because there was more stability than in the minors.

⁴“The Blue Jays were very accommodating to families,” Claudia continued to tell me. “They had a separate bus that traveled with the team to away games that was for the family. This way the players could sit with their families and children while traveling to away games.” Claudia explained as long as her family could travel, right up until her kids started school, baseball made “this really nice life with this really specific rhythm. Then



you have this offseason. When you’re lucky enough to have made the Major Leagues, you don’t have to have another job and you can spend a lot of concentrated time together.” For a long time baseball provided a way for the their family to be together, both during the season and the off season. It united their family and created memories of time spent collectively. As their children got older and had to go to school the family could not always be together when the baseball season was

⁴ Claudia and Janine at Union College’s Parent’s Weekend in the fall of 2015. I interviewed them both during this time.

in session during the same time as school. Baseball however, planted memories in the family from an early age of time together.

Claudia's daughter, Janine, is a baseball fan still because of her father. I asked Janine when I spoke to her what her earliest baseball memory was. She told me, "I think one time in Toronto when I was little I got to go into the broadcast booth with my dad during the game. I got to say something in the microphone...It was so fun and exciting to be with my dad." She went on to explain that baseball was a point of connection for her and her family. When Janine and her siblings were older they no longer traveled with their dad because they had to go to school and therefore he would be gone for weeks at a time. "When he was traveling and we were at home in Florida we would always watch the games on TV and see him on TV," she told me. It was a sense of comfort for her family and a way for them to be near their dad.

Janine described it best: "It was definitely an integral part of our family because one, we were really proud of him and two, it unified us when he was gone. It was a way to feel like he was still here when he was gone traveling for the season. And so to this day, now that he is really gone, it serves as such a nostalgia to us and reminds us of those days." Janine's father died when she was ten and therefore baseball has an even more important meaning in her family.

Janine's cousin, Ali, is also a large baseball fan whose memories of baseball started with Janine's father (her uncle) as well. "I remember when I was really little I was a Blue Jays 'fan' because my uncle (Janine's dad) pitched for them. Later he was a color commentator for them and would come to Boston during the season when the Jays were in town. I loved those visits! We would go to the game and he would invite us up to

the booth for a little bit to watch from up there. It was such a cool view and he would show me how things worked behind the scenes,” remembered Ali. For Janine and Ali their first memories of baseball started in the press box with their father and uncle and have each affected them greatly and shaped them into baseball fans.

The love of baseball ripples down through a family. Young girls pick up the love of baseball from their mothers, fathers or even grandmothers and the tradition stays within a family.

The Stadium

Baseball stadiums are extremely family-friendly. When I had the chance to speak to Brad Zollars, the Head of Marketing for the Kansas City Royals, he told me how Kauffman Stadium, the stadium where the Royals play, attracts many families.

“In baseball it seems to be different to be here [the stadium] than to watch it on TV. It’s hard to describe unless you have been to a baseball game. I think it lends itself perfectly towards family, especially our ballpark [Kauffman Stadium]. The outfield experience we have here, in terms of a family perspective, is second to none. Even if you wanted to be with your kids out in the outfield for all three hours and did not get to watch any of the game you could easily do that. There’s just so much to do out there,” he told me. Kauffman Stadium is a beautiful stadium with many different things to keep your family busy with. It not only has fountains in the back of the outfield that make it special, but there are also many things for kids to do in the outfield, such as a full little league baseball field and mini golf. When kids are young and do not necessarily have the attention span to sit there and watch an entire nine-inning game they can go with their

family to the outfield and occupy their time without actually having to leave the stadium and still can be together.⁵

What also makes going to a ballpark unique is the downtime there is for families to spend time together. There is not always constant action in a baseball game. There is time between innings and half innings that allow families to sit and talk with one another. Suzanne



Longo, whose father owned a minor league baseball team in Oneonta, New York, said her father brought the team into their town to help the community. “I think it’s a great environment to be in with your family and your friends. You can talk during the games and still be watching the game. You’re close enough in minor league baseball to engage with the players on the field. It’s a nice summer night and it was always affordable for families in Oneonta. That was a big part of it for us—that people could come. It wasn’t going to break the bank,” she explained.

Suzanne is right: for a family baseball does not break the bank compared to other sporting events. The average cost for a ticket to a MLB game is \$29. The average cost for a ticket to a NFL game is \$85; it is \$62 for an NHL game and \$53 for an NBA. A family

⁵ A mother and her son watching a game at Kauffman Stadium this summer

of four could go to a professional baseball game for \$116 while a family of four could go to a professional football game for a \$340 entry.⁶ It is a much more affordable family outing to a baseball stadium than it is to any other sporting event.

The stadium where Suzanne's family's Oneonta team played was also very unique. The stadium did not serve alcohol; people were not allowed to get a beer at the game. "It was completely on my father," she told me. "He thought in minor league baseball and in Upstate New York or small towns like ours, that once you start to pull the trigger on serving beer and the admissions price being as low as it is, that you're going to attract an element to come just to drink the beer. Then families and women won't want to come because it's not that same environment and he wanted to protect that for people who just wanted to come and enjoy the game." The concept of going to a baseball game as a family event and keeping it that way is very important, it is one of the main ways baseball markets itself, as will be seen later. It is not normal for fans to get out of hand due to drinking too much. The reason why the environment baseball stadiums create is so welcoming to families is partly because the fans at the games are much more agreeable and friendly than they are at other sporting events.

Football versus Baseball

Football is the most popular sport in America. For years football has surpassed baseball in popularity. When comparing baseball's appeal to other sports I focus on football specifically because of its huge presence in the United States and because some people now believe football is the new national pastime.

⁶ Statistics were taken from Statista Inc. The statistics are the average price of tickets in the 2014/2015 seasons of each major professional sport.

The Fans

While in Kansas City this summer doing my research I sat at dinner with my uncle, aunt and their two friends—all of them are Kansas City Royals and Chiefs fans. They were talking about the Chiefs, Kansas City's football team, and how my uncle and his friends had given up their season tickets for the Chiefs. "The fans have changed," his friend Andy told me. "First of all, no one sits the entire game, everyone is constantly standing and most people are belligerent from drinking all morning, tailgating for the game." He continued, "The fans have become more violent and more rowdy." This is the trend recently with many football stadiums and their fans.

"I wasn't allowed to go to [Philadelphia] Eagles games until I was in high school," said a college-aged woman named Laura. The unruly fans at football games generate an atmosphere at that repels some families. At baseball games you see many young children, including babies because it is not as hostile an environment. Suzanne Longo also lives in Philadelphia now and spoke about the Eagles. "I've never been to an Eagles game and I could have a ticket to any Eagles game I wanted. I don't want to go to an Eagles game. My husband went to a game last year and a guy and a girl in front of them got into a fight. I think the guy went to hit her, they were smashed, and Tom [her husband] and his friends had to intervene." Spending money to watch that instead of a game is not enticing.

The Eagles are not the only professional football team that has had these infamous issues with fans. At most professional football games you see men without their shirts off with painted stomachs or scandalously clad women, wearing cheese-cube bra tops despite

below freezing weather at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. You will not find that at a baseball game.

Author Sean MacDonald visited all 32 NFL football stadiums in 2013 as research for his book *The Ultimate Football Road Trip*. In MacDonald's book he described the Buffalo Bills' fans as the drunkest fans he saw. He wrote:

Inside the stadium seemed like a free-for-all at times, with fans moving around constantly and far too many in the advanced stages of inebriation, especially in the lower level end zone seats. Beer was constantly being spilled on the concourse and stairways to the seats, making things that much more dangerous.

Tailgating for hours before football games is a norm, whereas in baseball it is less so. This makes fans intoxicated before the game even starts. While you will find drunk fans at any professional sporting game where alcohol is served, it is not as overwhelming a characteristic of a baseball park as it is of a football stadium.

Terry Hill, the daughter of Hall of Fame Coach Sid Gillman, grew up around football as an avid football fan, but today at the age of 71, is a faithful baseball and San Francisco Giants fan. "I was a very patrician, very passionate football fan, as you can imagine. My dad was a professional coach; you lived and died with winning and losing," stated Terry when I interviewed her over the phone. Terry, who goes to many games now and sometimes goes to games alone, commented on the fans at the San Francisco Giants game when I asked her what it was like to go to a game alone. "I love it because everybody is so friendly," said Terry. "I don't know anyone around me, I'm also 71-

years-old and I think people think I'm a bit of a novelty being there by myself, but people are very friendly to me." Terry commented that her son recently observed that many parents bring their few-months-old babies to the games. That is a normal thing to do in baseball. This summer, like Terry's son, I saw many babies at the games with their families in Kansas City.

I have also experienced the wonder of baseball fans. On the last day of October this year, I was lucky enough to see the Kansas City Royals play the New York Mets at Citi Field in New York City, in Game Four of the World Series. Not only was this something I had been looking forward to all my life, but the game also provided me with beneficial field notes. The Mets were up against the Royals 3-2 until in the eighth inning with one out left when the Royals made a comeback and eventually won the game 5-3.

I sat in a section with my family in the upper deck of the stadium, surrounded by Mets fans. People would figure that the World Series mood would make for a hostile environment between the two groups of fans. It was not. The Mets fans in front of us joked around with us, introduced themselves to us, we even bought them a beer. When the game was eventually over and the Royals had won they shook our hands and told us it was well deserved. I do not know if it was because Royals fans and Mets fans have a lot in common—both fans have watched their teams struggle throughout the years. The Mets have not won a World Series since 1986, one year after the Royals last won the World Series in 1985 (until this past year in 2015!). I imagine, however, that it was not as cordial between Seahawks and Patriots fans during the Super Bowl last year!

Violence

“The violence in football really is off-putting,” Terry told me after I questioned why she thought the male to female fan ratio was much more even in baseball than in football. “It’s the nature of the game, besides how many players are being arrested for spousal abuse and girlfriend abuse, just watching the game can be difficult. The physical contact, you can hear those collisions. It’s off-putting.” The violence in football is another reason why football is not as much of a family sport as is baseball. Even President Obama came out to say if he had sons he would not let them play football. Although some people like to watch the violence of football, it is less appropriate for families.

Baseball is a family-oriented sport and this attracts a wider fan base, including women. Baseball and the outings families take together going to the game creates everlasting memories. This gives female fans a natural window into the game and from there they become real fans. The love of baseball gets passed down through a family and to the women in that family.

Chapter Three

MARKETING TOWARDS FEMALE FANS

“Blue is a good color for girls to wear.” A simple statement, that out of context seems harmless, but in context left me speechless.

This was a statement made to me by the Saturday morning talk show host for the sports radio station I worked at this summer. Todd was younger than the rest of the hosts, not past the age of thirty. I decided one morning, while working with him, to ask what he thought about female fans of baseball. As a sports radio host, I assumed he would have thought about the matter a little and would have some good insight into the subject. He then told me that he believed women are such big fans of the Kansas City Royals because of the colors of the team. “They have a nice royal blue, and blue is a good color for girls to wear.”

He then went on to explain his thought. “The Kansas City Chiefs,” he said (the football team in Kansas City), “wear red and that is a hard color for girls to wear, not everyone looks good in red like they do in blue.” I tried to hold back my astonishment when he made this claim and continued to question him on the subject. I asked him if violence could have had something to do with women’s favoritism towards baseball over football. He shrugged me off and said that could have something to do with it.

My conversation with Todd got me thinking and while I hoped people did not think I loved the Royals because I look good in blue, I wondered about marketing by baseball teams to women and if that had an affect on the female baseball fan.

The Sporting World in General

It does not take an expert to see that different professional sports and professional sports teams take various approaches to promoting their team, or in another sense their brand, to females. For a long time the tactics pursued by different sports teams to appeal to women was to “shrink it and pink it.” When it came to women’s merchandise in the sports world there was a universal take on how marketers thought women wanted to dress: in form-fitting, pink jerseys.

Even when sports marketers use what seem like more modern tactics, their efforts can fail because they do not make an effort to understand women. For instance, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers have launched a women’s movement called RED. I stumbled upon an article from the *New York Times* when I was in Kansas City on the subject, written by Juliet Macur. When you look up the Buccaneers’ program on their website they describe it as “the official Buccaneers fan engagement program for women.” My first thought, when reading about their “movement” is that it is ironic, something that Macur mentions as well. The Buccaneers new quarterback, whom they drafted number one overall in the 2015 NFL draft, was accused of raping a female Florida State University student while playing at Florida State University.

To make matters worse, their RED program has not had the reception they most likely planned on. The program had components such as how to plan the perfect tailgate party and what kind of Buccaneer style you can have. Macur uses a few other examples in her article of where their “movement” falls shorts. RED is aimed at teaching women about the game, however they do far from that. Macur explains, “the first ‘RED Term of the Week’ was ‘play clock,’ and women can click on the link to learn how it ‘actually has

nothing to do with the game clock”” (Macur, 2015).⁷

The Buccaneers attempt at attracting a female fan base was a flop. The response, instead of being positive, was quite negative. The team made women feel alienated by being spoken down to. This is exactly what the social feminists highlight, the use of sports as a way to exploit the inequalities of men and women and put women in positions of serving men. The RED movement basically shows women how to serve their male partners in the best way possible during the game. Mockingly, the movement for women treats them like idiots.

This summer while working at the sports radio station in Kansas City I also saw how there could be little to none marketing to women as potential sports fans. Part of my job was to go on the promotional events with the different daily radio shows. These events occur to help publicize the radio stations brand, as well as provide advertising for the different locations the show is being held at, such as car dealerships, stores, businesses, etc. Most of the places that the shows were held at were different bars, athletic stores (like Title One Boxing, a boxing outlet store) and automobile dealerships. The majority of the locations were geared towards male listeners. The only events that the sports radio station sponsored in which the majority of attendees were female was a Women’s 2015 World Cup watch party for the semi-finals and finals of the soccer World Cup. During that event there were not many men there either until the United States was playing in the finals of the World Cup. Marketing by the radio station to female fans was basically non-existent. The station holds a “listeners” golf tournament in August and every listener that signed up to play was a male listener.

⁷ When rereading the article now, almost two months later, I tried to click on the hyperlink to take me to the page on the play clock, the page is now gone.

It is interesting because the sports radio station is a predominately Kansas City Chiefs' radio station and this again could have to do with the idea that football is seen more as a male viewed sport than baseball.

Marketing Towards Female Fans in Baseball

As I stated earlier, the Texas Rangers have the biggest female fan base of any major league baseball team. The Texas Rangers, like the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, have a program that is geared toward women called the Rangers' Women's Club. It is, however, quite different. The Rangers' Women's Club has been around since 1974. I spoke with Aaron Rodgers who works in the Promotions and Entertainment department of the Texas Rangers.⁸ I asked him to explain what exactly the Rangers Women's Club was. He told me "The Texas Rangers Women's Club is made up of a group of women that completely volunteer their time and service to help transition an amazing day at Globe Life Park for our fans." This is very different than the way the Buccaneers organized their "women's movement." The Rangers have their female fans help put on the game and make women part of it.

I was told the "women help at the start of each game that has a promotion to deliver them. They give away one (ex: Elvis Andrus Garden Gnome, Prince Fielder Bobble head, Whataburger Coupons, etc) to each fan that arrives through the gates early enough to be one of the first 15,000-20,000 fans, depending on the day." They are involved with working with other fans as well as making the ballpark a great place to come to. Rodgers also explained to me besides helping with the game, what the other

⁸ I obtained Aaron Rodgers' contact information by calling the front office of the Rangers and asking to speak with someone who knew about the Women's Club program.

benefits the members of the club get. “For each hour a women’s club member aides in our promotions they will in return accrue an amount of points to be used for various Texas Ranger apparel, tickets, and additional promotion items,” he said. The Rangers made the female fans a part of the game instead of making them feel like they knew nothing about the game like the Buccaneers.

The Rangers are not the only baseball team that reaches out to their female fans better than the Buccaneers. The Philadelphia Phillies also have a program aimed to teach women more about the game of baseball. However, they run it much differently than Tampa Bay.

This is “Phillies Baseball 101.” It is a clinic put on by the Phillies inviting their female fans to the stadium for an up-close and personal lesson in baseball. It is a daylong event in the summer that starts at 9:30 in the morning and ends at the start of the game that night. The Phillies coaches put on a clinic and give the women drills on the field in hitting and fielding. The women also get to have a question and answer session with the players and the team’s executive members. This past year the Phillies had two clinics, one in June and another in August, both of them sold out. All the proceeds from the event go to the Phillies charities.⁹

Interview with Brad Zollars

I was able, while living in Kansas City, to interview the Head of Marketing and Advertising for the Kansas City Royals, Brad Zollars.¹⁰

⁹ Information about Phillies Baseball 101 was gained from the Phillies’ official website

¹⁰ I received Brad’s contact information when emailing the Royals to ask permission to conduct interviews in their park and if anyone in the front office would let me interview them

Here's a little background about Brad first. Born in New York, he graduated from the University of Kansas. He went on to work for VML, a Kansas City based advertising company, as a senior accounts manager. "I have always loved sports," he told me. "I always knew I wanted to be in sports marketing in some aspect so I kind of just got some experience any way I could while I was at the agency and then a position with the Royals opened up and I ended up getting the job."

During my conversation with the Brad I learned the different ways that the Kansas City Royals, in particular, market to female fans. During our conversation Brad told me that "42.9 percent of Royals fans are female and watch them on TV, listen to them on the radio or attend the games. So that's close to 45 percent of our fans and that's a pretty big chunk." The Royals are consistent with the rest of baseball.

I questioned him on their strategy for marketing to their female fans and the different events they have to do this. "The thing that is most important to us and what research shows us, is that females are usually the ones who control a lot of the entertainment spending in a household, so we want to speak to that pretty directly," said Brad.

To me this was one of the most important statements Brad made in the conversation. I was surprised that in most households women were in charge of managing entertainment spending. Therefore, not only are they targeting families, but also more specifically, they are targeting women themselves.

Our conversation continued with a discussion on what it is like to bring your child to Kauffman Stadium. To review, Kauffman Stadium is a beautiful stadium that was built in 1973. The stadium was first called Royals Stadium but renamed in 1993, in honor of

the Royals' owner Ewing Kauffman. Brad informed me when the stadium was redone in 2010 it became even more family-friendly. Besides making a very large scoreboard with a crown on top and adding fountains to the outfield (Kansas City is known as the "Fountain City"), they added a kids' area. As mentioned previously, "the outfield experience we have here, in terms of a family perspective, is second to none. Even if you wanted to be with your kids out in the outfield for all three hours and didn't get to watch any of the game you could easily do that. There's just so much to do out there," said Brad. In the outfield experience there is a battling challenge, mini golf, Little K (mini baseball field), carousel, and many more. It is a big draw for families.

For women specifically the Royals have a few events, but one big event. This is Girls Night Out at the K. "We throw that every year; we've been doing that for at least ten years here. Basically we take over the entire Outfield Experience area at our ballpark, we bring in over 15-20 vendors, the whole event benefits Go Red for Women," Brad explained to me. He then told me that Go Red for Women is a non-profit and focuses on women with heart disease. They have been partners with the Royals for five or six years now. They have different events at Girls Night Out including a survivor's fashion show. They have women pick out Royals apparel and model it down the runway. This past year they had more than 10,000 female fans show up and part take in the event.

The Royals also try to market to women with their apparel--not by making it pink or jeweled but by making it well. Brad explained to me that they have made an effort to make clothing with good-quality material, which helps with their younger fans as well. There is a popular brand in Kansas City called Charlie Hustle. They created a shirt that has a heart with KC in the middle. In Kansas City those shirts are extremely popular (I

even have one) and they make them in Royals colors (as well as Chiefs colors). The Royals partnered with Charlie Hustle to create their shirts for one of their promotions, Gordo Nation (outfielder Alex Gordon's fan club). "Obviously that's really impactful for the younger fans and it's a brand that they are aware of and it's a higher quality shirt," expressed Brad.

After explaining all of the different events the Royals do to try to appeal to their female fans I asked Brad to tell me who he thought the average female fan was. His response: "Really I'd say it's pretty similar to men. I would describe them as very knowledgeable. When they go to the ballpark they, from what I've seen, know just as much as the men--if not more in some cases and right now with our popularity being at its peak we are seeing more and more females come out to the game. It helps that we have very engaged and interesting personalities from the players stand point. They are really easy; fans can engage with them, they are really good with our fans. They have different personalities, they love getting out in the city, and so that's a blessing for a marketer." In the eyes of the Royals franchise their male and female fans are the same. This is essential to marketing to women; they do not want to be seen as different than men.

Marketing in baseball is not just about marketing to the female fan but to her family and addressing her with the same respect as a male fan. In baseball, family is at the center which could be why marketing towards female fans seems to be more successful in baseball than in football and other sports.

Fan Reaction

When speaking to Brad I found consistencies in baseball's strategy for marketing toward female fans and the attitudes of women I spoke with.

Terry Hill's, the San Francisco Giants fan, attitude reflected these consistencies. Terry did not grow up a baseball fan because her father was a long time Hall of Fame football coach. She became a San Francisco Giants fan because of the characters on the team. Terry became a fan of the Giants in 2010, before the All-Star break and before they made the push for the World Series and won it. "I've always been a reader of the sports page and I just started reading about the team," she told me. "I don't know if you know anything about the 2010 Giants, they were if not unique still very interesting as players. We got to know them as players. They had a lot of weird players like Brian Wilson. People like that who had been around and then came to San Francisco and all the sudden were great. The more I read about the team the more I just liked them as a group of people. And then I got hooked on baseball." The team was a likeable and therefore, easier for fans to relate to.

Joan said something similar. I met Joan while I was at a game this summer in the middle of July. The Royals were playing the Astros at Kauffman Stadium and it was over 90 degrees out by the time first pitch came around at six in the evening. I spoke with Joan outside on the promenade of the upper deck because absolutely no one was sitting in the seats to bake in the scorching sun. Joan had been a 30-year season ticket holder with the Royals but gave them up in 2012. Joan originally came from Omaha and moved to Kansas City in the late 70s to early 80s. During that time the Royals had a great baseball team. "It was a really fun and inexpensive sport so a good friend of mine and I just

started to come all the time,” said Joan, since then she has been a Royals fan. When I asked her why she was not a Royals fan growing up she told me it was because she was from the country and she was not exposed to the team. The Royals did not move to Kansas City until 1969, therefore for Joan there was not a team for her to cheer for until then. Now Kansas City’s fan base extends to Nebraska and Arkansas. It’s a four state team: Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Nebraska.

I asked Joan what her favorite thing about baseball was she told me it was hard to decide but finally came up with an answer. “I think probably, currently, it’s the player enthusiasm. It is so fun to see them get excited about the game because that’s what they used to do back in the 80s, get excited about the game. We lost that during the 90s and early 2000s.” Now the team is young and doing well.

Just as Brad said before, the Royals are a very marketable team because of the player personalities. Salvador Perez, Eric Hosmer, Alex Gordon, Mike Moustakas and Lorenzo Cain are all different and young characters that keep the team’s energy up, and they interact with fans. Having players on the team that are fun and charismatic also makes them easier to relate to.

Another point Joan made to me was about Ladies Night. I asked Joan if she thought the Royals did an effective job of marketing to their female fans. “I think adding the Ladies Nights Out was really marketing to us and really helpful. I think that really targeted woman as a whole, young, old, indifferent.”

During another game against the Angels I spoke to a woman named Judy. She was about the same age as Joan, in her late fifties or early sixties. Judy happened to be from Omaha, as well, and did not start to like and watch the Royals until 1985, the last

time the Royals won the World Series until 2015. When I asked Judy the same question, how she feels about the way the Royals market to women she told me that she believed “they market toward females in baseball more than any other sport. They have a lot more female things than football or hockey or any other sport.”

It seemed to be a general consensus among the older female fans that their team was doing a good job at marketing to them. However, when I interviewed younger female fans the answers I received varied greatly from the older fans. One such fan I spoke to on this subject was Joanna. Joanna, whom I mentioned with her family earlier, is a 21-year-old senior in college and a huge Mets fan. During our conversation I asked her how she felt about the way the Mets market to females. She was a critique of the “pink it and shrink it” philosophy. “Most of the female apparel is pink and stereotypically ‘women’s colors’ and they make hats and shirts that say ‘Mrs. Wright’ (because of David Wright) with a kissy face and in rhinestones, which I obviously got in 7th grade, but now would never. They do make it more of an attraction thing with women to the players and less of an idolization with the players for males.” (Luckily, most teams have abandoned this approach with their official apparel recently, although the Mets seem to still have a “Mrs. Harvey” shirt.)

This is something Brad touched on before. There is a gap in marketing to college-age women. A young girl might like something in pink and rhinestones but a woman in college might not. Women fans want to break away from the stereotype that she is only at the game to look at the men playing the game, which would seem to be the case when wearing a “Mrs. Wright” shirt. Teams have not found a way to draw in this age group yet. It is a start, however, moving on from the “Mrs.” shirts.

The response that Joanna gave me was extremely similar to the response I received from another woman who is a senior in college and whom I also mentioned previously, Janine. Janine has been a Toronto Blue Jay's fan all her life. Her father was a pitcher for the Jays, as well as a commentator once he retired. "I think teams advertise in a really stereotypical way towards women like with the pink shirts and almost 'sexualizing' of the players. They don't expect women to just love the game for the game, but instead the marketing appeals to the traditional gender roles like 'girls like pink things' and 'girls want to marry pro athletes.'" Janine's response was almost exactly the same to Joanna's. They think that women are advertised to in a stereotypical way.

To young women who are in college and have not had a family on their own, there is a label that they are trying to overcome. They do not see baseball marketing to them because they do not have children. Therefore, they perceive the marketing by baseball not as successful to women. Whereas, the older women believe it is. As the college-aged women get older however, and have a family of their own, baseball's marketing affects them again.

Chapter Four

“WHY DO YOU LOVE BASEBALL?”

There is was commercial running during the 2015 Major League Baseball postseason created by Bank of America. The commercial captures fans’ “baseball memories.” In the commercial the viewer sees about eight fans sharing their favorite baseball memories. There are four women that appear on the screen separately and almost all of their memories have nothing to do with the game itself. The first woman speaks about her husband getting the organ man at Fenway to play her favorite song. The second describes her mom telling her, on the first base side at Giants stadium, that she is going to be a big sister. Finally, the third recounts her first kiss was on the kiss cam. The fourth female fan’s answer was the closest thing to actually having anything to do with baseball. She described the time her dad came back from the game with ten baseball helmets.

Love at All Ages

“How much do I love baseball? I love it so much that I would come home from junior high and the games, every game was on channel 90. And I remember coming home and watching the last game of the World Series and getting on my hands and knees, praying to God that they would win.” This was said by Jeanie Boffardi, a die hard New York Mets Fan.

The *New York Post* recently did a story on three women, including Jeanie, who have been life long fans of the New York Mets. Jeanette is 86, Jeanie is 75 and Mildred is 96. They have all been fanatics of the Mets ever since the beginning of the franchise in

1962. The short video, about four minutes long, showed the Mets organization inviting the three fans to get a private tour of Citi Field, including the Mets Clubhouse and a chance to stand on the field. Later the Mets invited the women to a game over the summer where the stadium, fans and team thanked them for their lifetime of support. These women have made baseball a part of their lives for decades and have had a relationship with their team since its creation.

Baseball attracts people at all ages¹¹, whether you start out as a young fan and or an old fan, through the years you stay a fan. Over my summer of research I came across many different female fans, of all ages. Every fan had her reasons for loving baseball, but most reasons stemmed from



the same few concepts. Many of the female fans became fans because of their family and the memories, but when it came down to it they were genuine fans because of the different parts of the game.

¹¹ A fan named Emma (age 13) and her brother Jack (age 17) at Kauffman Stadium

I interacted with fans of all ages reflecting that baseball appeals to females at very different points in their life and stays with them. I spoke to a ten-year-old girl who had just had just been to her first baseball game. Her name was Mia and she was from Chicago, Illinois. I asked her if she liked the first baseball game she ever attended, she just smiled and nodded her head yes, then hid behind her mother. Her mom stepped in and told me “it was a big event, a kid’s first baseball game.”

On the other end of the age spectrum my grandma had her bridge club in Kansas City over for lunch this summer. They have been getting together almost every month since the 1950s. The 80 to 86-year-old women discussed many things during this lunch, from their health issues to what they enjoy doing now. One of the things they enjoy doing now is following the Royals. Seven out of eight said they followed the Royals. They were proud to be able to say they knew the players names and numbers and various statistics. The group even said that they rarely, if ever, go to bed before the game is over.

“There were a ton of women on their own, which is so funny that you would say that, including my two single aunts.” The Oneonta Yankees, according to Suzanne Longo, had a strong fan base among females. For Longo’s aunts it was a “safe place to be and they loved the sport.” They were widows and went to the game with their sister-in-laws. Longo herself, when she moved to Boston after college, went to many Red Sox games with her girl friends. “If I couldn’t get anyone to go with I would go on my own. I lived in Boston, the Red Sox sucked but the tickets were cheap. I would just go; you know why wouldn’t I go?” No matter the age of a female fan, her passion can be just as strong.

What is it About Baseball?

Women love baseball for a variety of reasons and I was able to find out some of them during my research this summer and speaking to the fans. Many responses I received were rooted in family, while others were about the game itself. Two of the college-aged women I spoke to, Janine and Joanna, touched on both of these explanations. Janine, whose father played professionally for the Blue Jays and then later commentated for the team and whose mother I also had the chance to interview, described it with memories. “It brings my family together,” she told me, “and helps us remember good times and memories.”

Baseball brings families and loved ones together. “He’s a huge baseball fan,” replied one of the fans, named Mary, I talked to at a Royals-Detroit Tigers game, gesturing to her husband. “I love that it has brought us together. We have fun watching it, we go to games together, so that is a great part of baseball for me.” Baseball has a knack for uniting people. During World War II, when the All-American Girls League was formed, the purpose was to bring the American population together and keep moral up while the men were gone fighting. Today, the family aspect helps bring women to the games.

Female fans also like baseball for the game itself. Remember Joanna? She got into baseball because of her family but now is a true fan. “I love how it is truly a team sport where individuals need to contribute on their own in order to win,” she explained to me. “I also like how during a game, the outcome can change in a second, like one hit, one play. On any given day, a team can beat the other which keeps things interesting. It's just

very different from any other sport and I like how unique it is.” This was something I had heard before. The game of baseball is not over till it’s over and that makes it exciting.

One woman I spoke to when the Pittsburgh Pirates were in town at Kauffman Stadium gave me a very similar answer. Karen, age 72, was not a baseball fan growing up. She was from Topeka, “there wasn’t really a Kansas City team when I was younger and my dad was a big Cardinals fan so I knew baseball, but was not a fan until the Royals came along.” Karen told me what she loves about baseball and what makes it different than other sports is “you could be behind, behind, behind, and then bam in the ninth inning you’re right back in it.” The same mindset; it is not over until it’s over.

Another aspect of the game that Joanna told me she loved and that I also heard from other people was the mental aspect. “It is a very mental game because it is not just acting on instinct, you need to know the game and you have to be smart and know what to do during every different situation (runner on first with one out, etc,) and the count in every at bat.” This is seen in many baseball games.

Janine’s mom, Claudia, said almost the same thing. “My favorite part of baseball is the strategy and all the different levels of the strategy,” she explained. “It starts with every pitch in this great kind of one-on-one battle with the pitcher versus the batter. Then depending on the count, depending on the score, depending on whether somebody’s on base, depending on who’s in the outfield, depending on who’s coming up after that batter, it’s everything, all the strategy changes with every single pitch and every single at bat. I like that it’s a really strategic and numbers driven game.”

Claudia also touched upon an aspect of baseball that many people, especially those who are not fans, complain about: the timing of baseball. “Also, my favorite thing

about baseball is the pacing of it.” Claudia added: “it is the only game without a clock. It has such strong association with it, that it’s the spring and all new possibilities. The long seasons, the long games, I like all of that.” Many people want to change this part of baseball. Speed up the game so it no longer takes 2 hours and a half, maybe longer, to finish.

“I used to love watching the offense in baseball, but with this team I love watching the defense,” recited Haley at another game this summer. There are many parts to baseball games that attract female viewers.

Terry Hill’s answer stressed a different aspect of the game. Terry, who has not been a baseball fan all her life, used to despise going to the games. I asked her, “What changed? Why do you now love baseball when before you could not stand going to the games?”

“I think my interest in baseball players as people,” she told me. “Because I am a big reader, and so of course I read Jim Bouton’s book when it was popular, and for years my image of a baseball player was Mickey Mantle flirting with the women in the stands. That book painted baseball players as such idiots, nobody to admire certainly or have any interest in. I think, and maybe this is naïve and stupid on my part, but I think maybe the character of baseball players has changed over the years, over the decades.” The book that Terry is referring to is *Ball Four*, a book Jim Bouton wrote that came out in 1970.¹²

¹² Jim Bouton was a longtime New York Yankee, but his book *Ball Four*, was a published version of his diary he kept during the 1969 season. During this time he was with the Seattle Pilots and then the Houston Astros. However, much of the book reflects his time with the New York Yankees. When the book came out it was very controversial. Bouton was seen as a traitor, the Commissioner of Baseball Bowie Kuhn even tried to force Bouton to say the book was untrue. The book did not paint baseball players in a good light. The book showed baseball players as drunks, drug users and womanizers. The Commissioner called the book “detrimental to baseball” (McGimpsey, 2000).

At some point the view of baseball players changed. “It’s a much better educated group of people than it ever used to be,” Terry said to me.

Another fan talked about the environment of the game. “I just love being outside and enjoying a summer night at the ballpark.” She explained to me being at the baseball game on a cool summer night in July was one of her most beloved things to do, “there’s nothing like grabbing a beer, getting to your seat and looking out onto the field on a nice summer night.”

For other fans it was the sound of the game. Ali, Janine’s cousin, grew up in Winchester, Massachusetts as a huge Red Sox fan. She has finished two out of her five years of surgical residency and is currently on a hiatus and pursuing a PhD in Molecular Medicine before returning to complete her training and become a pediatric surgeon. Her husband is a huge Yankees fan and they were married at 1:05 in the afternoon, because it is the time of the first pitch for many baseball games. They are an example of the couple continuing the tradition of baseball in their new family with one another.

Ali painted a picture for me that she imagines when she thinks of baseball. “The sound,” she conveyed, “it has a such a nostalgic quality for me. My brother had this Adirondack chair that he made in woodshop in high school, and we would sit in it on summer evenings on the front porch with the game on the a portable radio. I loved the sound of it—dull roar of the crowd, sound of the bat hitting the ball, when you knew it was a hit even though you could not see it. Scent of the citronella candle, sun just setting. Hearing the sound of the little kids playing in the neighborhood.”

Ali did not just tell me what it was like; she shared it in a poetic way. This is the love of baseball that has been seen and eternalized by many writers and poets.

Breaking the Stereotype

I mentioned previously there is a stereotype that many people, mainly men, believe: women only watch baseball because of the men playing it. There is a typical response that many of the younger fans I spoke to get when they tell their guy friends they are fans of baseball. They are questioned on their knowledge of the team and have to prove they truly are fans of baseball--something I have also experienced.

Back to the commercial I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The first two answers from women describe what some many consider very “girly” aspects of baseball: having her husband play her song, or getting her first kiss. Answers by the male fans describe a radio used every night to listen to games in bed, or the dirt from Yankee Stadium. Those sounded like baseball memories. Even Claudia brought up that commercial when I spoke with her. “I mean these are not speaking very well for female fans. There’s nothing about knowing or appreciating the game,” she expressed to me during our conversation.

A commercial with the women I interviewed articulating their love for baseball and their memories might speak for female fans as a whole lot better. Their reasons for loving baseball were rooted in the strategy, the atmosphere the game creates, the way it brings their family together, and the fact the game is never over until the last out has been played.

Female baseball fans range in all ages but their amount of passion for the game is all the same. Family brings women to the game, whether as a young girl, a new wife, or a grandmother, but the game itself keeps them there and turns them into real fans. Their passion for and knowledge of the game makes women real fans, just like their

brothers. It breaks the stereotype that women are only interested in baseball because of men. Baseball truly is a national pastime—for all Americans, male and female.

Chapter Five

WOMEN IN BASEBALL

As touched upon in my introduction and examination of previous literature, women have had many different roles in baseball even though it is an all male sport. During my research I was able to talk to a female fans that have played different roles in baseball.

Suzanne Longo, Oneonta, NY

Suzanne Longo is a life long baseball fan whose connection with baseball started with her father's minor league team in Oneonta, New York.¹³

Suzanne's family has had a long history with baseball. It started with her grandfather. Her mother's father owned a Red Sox farm team in Oneonta, New York during the 1940s. It was a minor league team that played in the American League. After a few years, however, the money dried up and the Red Sox moved their team to Shamokin, Pennsylvania. A few decades later in the 1960s, when Suzanne's father, Sam Nader, was the mayor of Oneonta, he brought the team back. In 1966, her father and grandfather along with several other people pitched in a bit of money for a team. Nader went to baseball's winter meeting and brought back a team.

Nader was mayor of Oneonta during the Vietnam War. "We had two colleges and there were lots of protests going on and jobs were really hard; life was not great. A lot of our businesses were shut down and my father thought that baseball would be a good thing

¹³ I spoke with Suzanne one afternoon over the phone. I got her contact because she is the mother of a girl that attends Union College. I explained to her the research I was doing and why I thought it was important to interview her as not only a female fan of baseball, but also because she worked in baseball.

to bring back for our community,” Suzanne told me when I asked why this was so important to her father. At a certain point baseball turned from a man’s only game to a community game.

The team was affiliated with the Red Sox for one season, during which Nader was president; he hired a friend as general manager. Then in 1967 the team switched affiliations from the Red Sox to the New York Yankees. From then until 1998, the minor league team in Oneonta was part of the New York Yankees’ farm system. Then the Yankees moved their team to Staten Island and the Oneonta team became part of the Detroit Tigers’ farm system.

“When baseball started to become more about money, minor league baseball especially, started to have to have a gimmick to get people to come out to the ballpark; so he sold the team in 2008,” said Suzanne. Nader never sold beer at the games. He never made significant money off the team, most of the time he barely broke even. “He wanted to make it a family event. It was nice; it was a great way to grow up. We met some of the most interesting people in the world,” she told me.

Suzanne grew up working at the ballpark with her entire family. Her brother, her sister and all their friends worked at the park. “In lout ??? of a summer vacation we had thirty-six new people come every summer, some of them made it to the Major Leagues and we were friends with them,” explained Suzanne. All of the Yankees personnel would spend a great deal of time there as well. Plus, because Oneonta is so close to Cooperstown, New York, where the Baseball Hall of Fame is, a whole different group of people attended to the games. “Every summer was different than the last and we got to meet all sorts of interesting people. We kept those relationships,” she described.

Not only did Suzanne spend her summers working at the ballpark, but she also eventually ran the team itself for a season--in 1982, after her senior year of college. "It was really awesome for me because John Elway played for me. It was his only year in baseball. It was a fun year; it was a great group of people," Suzanne told me. John Elway was a Hall of Fame NFL Quarterback for the Denver Broncos who had a short stint in baseball before entering into the 1983 NFL Draft. Elway played from June to early August. "Every game had an ESPN person there, or a *Newsweek*, or a *Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, or something. Even for all the rest of the players it was a different season than most" she clarified for me, trying to get me to understand what it was like. As she described this to me I thought it was different season for most not just because Elway was there, but also because they were lead by a woman.

I wanted to know what it was like for Suzanne to be in charge and if she thought she was at any disadvantage being a woman and not a man leading a baseball team. "No, never, I had so much support," she told me. The one thing she was not allowed to do was go into the locker room after the games. The players would be in the locker room celebrating or giving interviews and she was not allowed in. In fact, Doris Kearns Goodwin, prominent historian, former presidential aide, and life-long baseball fan was the first woman to be allowed in the Red Sox locker room when she was a sports journalist.¹⁴

¹⁴ In contrast, the NFL didn't let women enter the locker room until they instituted an equal access policy in 1985. In September of 1990 Lisa Oslon, a reporter for the *Boston Herald*, However, was sexually harassed by players in the New England Patriots' locker room; the players made inappropriate gestures and comments to Oslon. As a result Oslon sued the NFL and won \$250,000 but then moved to Australia after fans of the Patriots harassed her (Falk, 2005).

Although Suzanne did not feel any prejudice when she worked in Oneonta as the general manager for a season she did feel it later. I inquired whether or not she had gone on to work in baseball further, whether it was in the Major Leagues or continuing to serve as general manager for her father's team. One would think that with such experience as running the team for a season it might not be too hard to find a job in the front office of some team.

"I could not get a job in baseball after that though. I mean I could have, as a secretary. I went to Boston so I interviewed with the Red Sox and I knew a million people in baseball, but the only thing anybody thought about when they asked you about an interview was how many words a minute you could type," expressed Suzanne, "It was a long time ago but I think it's still hard."

Women in the Front Office

Today, although women are still not on the field, there is finally a female presence in the front office. In Jean Ardell's book *Breaking into Baseball*, she touches on this subject. "The front office is also where women have made the greatest advances in baseball," Ardell states (Ardell, 2005). Ardell makes it clear that, although today there are many women in baseball management, this was not always the case, as it wasn't for Suzanne.

Then Kim Ng came along. Ng started out as an intern for the Chicago White Sox after she graduated from the University of Chicago in 1990. She made her way up the ranks until, in 1995, she was made Assistant Director of Baseball Operation. Then finally in 1998, the New York Yankees made Ng their Assistant General Manager; she was the

youngest ever at the age of 29 (Ardell, 2005). In 2011, she was made the Senior-Vice President of Baseball Operations for Major League Baseball. Ng has been seen as someone who could be baseball's first female Major League general manager. She has, however, interviewed for five general manager jobs with the Dodgers, Mariners, Angels, and twice with the Padres. She was passed over by a man every time.

Around Professional Sports

It is just as hard for women to find a place in authoritative positions in any professional sport. Baseball, however, may have a leg up on other leagues because they have been around for so long. It is also beneficial that women's attendance in baseball is so large and therefore valuable to have their input in the front office.

In 1946, Edith Houghton became the first female scout in professional baseball. The Philadelphia Phillies hired Houghton. The NFL had their first female scout thirty years later. That scout was Connie Carberg. After Carberg graduated from Ohio State in 1974 the New York Jets coach, Charley Winner offered her the job as team secretary. From there she made her way up to be the first female NFL scout in 1976 (Falk, 2005).

It will not be long before baseball has their first female general manager, given that women are genuine fans of the sport. Women understand baseball just as much as men and have become a great presence as fans. The women and the family-friendly aspect of the sport has made it easier for women to hold decision-making and powerful positions in baseball.

CONCLUSION

In her essay, "Fan," Doris Kearns Goodwin writes:

My continuing love of baseball is inseparably linked to memories of my father. On summer nights, when he came home from work, the two of us would sit together on our porch, reliving that day's Brooklyn Dodger game, which I had permanently preserved in the large red scorebook he'd given me for my seventh birthday (Goodwin, 1994).

Goodwin says it best: at the epicenter of a women's love for baseball is family. The memories of the good times and passion for all things in baseball is rooted with the family. A female fan gains her thirst for baseball from her parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. From there the love for the game becomes all too real, whether it is because watching it or listening to it reminds them of these cherished memories or because they simply love the game. Female fans' adoration of the game is authentic.

Baseball is continuing to improve its efforts marking to women. Baseball treats its female fans more seriously than any other professional sport. Although this is true, baseball still has a long way to go to capture women on their own and not their family. It is clear, however, that female baseball fans are more than just the pretty women in the stands, but indisputable fans

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