

# Editor's Note

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othing says summer to me like baseball does. Even though the season begins early, with spring training and exhibition games, and trails well into the fall—with the World Series in October—baseball still strikes me as the quintessential summer sport.

That might be because I have only been to baseball games in the summer, usually during a vacation or on a special outing with visiting friends. Or it could be because my grandparents came to visit us in the summer, and I can still remember my grandfather, a great fan of the sport, relaxed in a big chair, listening to baseball on his small transistor radio, the hum of the game providing a backdrop to our activities.

I've never been a steady fan of any one baseball team but have seen a number of them play in various cities. When I first moved to Washington, D.C., it did not have a major league baseball team (and had not had one since 1971, when the team had moved to Texas). In recent years baseball has been making a comeback in Washington. In 2005, the Montreal Expos relocated to Washington to become the Washington Nationals. For three years, they played in the existing RFK Stadium before moving to brand new Nationals Park. (The ballpark boasts of an excellent environmental rating and affords scenic views of the U.S. Capitol.) The first major league game in the ballpark took place March 30, 2008, when the Nationals defeated the Atlanta Braves 3–2. (I wasn't at that game, but I could see the lit-up high definition scoreboard from the balcony of my apartment.)

This year the opening game at Nationals Park marked the 100th anniversary of a baseball tradition—the president of the United States throwing the first pitch of the first game of baseball season. This ritual started on April 14, 1910, when President William Howard Taft threw the first pitch at the Washington Senators' home opener. In subsequent years, the president—or when the president had pressing business or there was a war going on, the vice president or a cabinet member—threw out the first pitch of each baseball season. Every U.S. president since Taft, except for Jimmy Carter, has taken part in this tradition.

At the Nationals' opener April 5, President Barack Obama took to the field in a bright red Washington Nationals jacket, but as he reached the pitcher's mound, in a show of loyalty to his former hometown favorite, he donned a Chicago White Sox cap before putting on his baseball glove and readying himself to throw the first pitch. Later, in the news media, Obama drew commentary (as presidents always do) about his out-of-uniform baseball cap and his less-than-perfect pitch. But the baseball season was off to an official start, and we were headed toward summer.

Whatever season it is in your country when you receive this issue, we hope that you'll enjoy reading the feature article about baseball and learning more about this American pastime.

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