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Kim Trevathan

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

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Kim Trevathan

Upon returning to the hotel room from Wrigley Field, I switched on the tv to watch the final play of the game I'd just witnessed. In retrospect it seems a strange thing to do, reviewing with such urgency what I'd just experienced, though I so rarely get to see professional baseball in person that I am addicted to replays and commentary. I stood a foot and a half from the screen, the remote poised, to watch the Florida Marlins' Preston Wilson catch Cub Angel Echevarria's drive in the bottom of the sixth, crash into the ivy-swathed brick wall, stagger sideways to face me in the right-field stands, then crumple and drop the ball. After the replay the CNN newscaster frowned prettily and commented, "That's the one problem with that field. There's no cushion under the ivy."

Ouch. That comment, that chirpy voice, produced a pain worse than Wilson's jammed wrist. (He would play the next day.) Worse than watching Cubs relief pitcher Tom "Flash" Gordon give up a game-winning home run to this same Preston Wilson in 2001, the precise *moment* that drained the Cubs' playoff hopes that year. Worse than watching the 2002 Cubs blow a 9-4 lead in the bottom of the ninth to the division-leading Cardinals and an 8-0 lead to the crosstown rival White Sox. Worse than watching Poor Todd Hundley (PTH) look at another strike three and springingly walk back to the dugout. (Despite a salary of \$6 million a year PTH, mercifully traded by the Cubs after the season, happily batted in the .190s.) Now this newscaster, feigning sympathy for the injured opponent, was disrespecting not only a rare Cubs win but Wrigley Field itself, and I, a tourist from East Tennessee, a Cubs fan who had suffered since the early 1980s, was outraged. I had just witnessed a perfect game as it were, with a perfect ending, and I had no tolerance for inept commentary. In talking back to the flickering image of the newscaster, I had entered that zone of cosmic injustice that Cub fans inhabit with zeal and frustration and dread. **[End Page 130]**

During the strike-threatened summer of 2002, when writers and networks seemed obsessed with compiling Baseball's Greatest Moments, Wilson's crash/drop constituted a great moment of a different sort, a personal favorite in a "meaningless," soon-to-be-forgotten game, a confirmation that in spite of inflated salaries, labor negotiations, little or no motivation to win, for the spectator a single moment in baseball can still astound and delight. The greatest-moment coffee table books with photographs from baseball's hundred-plus years miss the point in many ways. One of the problems with these books is their nearsighted focus on achievement and momentous occasions, such as World Series games and no-hitters, hitting streaks, and dramatic game-winning homers in championships. None of that with the Cubs and Marlins, two mediocre teams playing in mid-July, the Cubs actually straining to reach mediocrity.

That summer MasterCard's ad campaign listed prices for items that fans can purchase with a credit card, then sold the *Moment*, considered priceless. MasterCard was asking people to vote from their list of greatest baseball moments, weighing it heavily, of course, on the well-publicized, predictable baseball successes. Writer King Kaufman noted that the list was weighted too heavily on recent achievements and compiled his own list of memorable (not necessarily great) moments, showing off his knowledge of esoteric baseball history with names like Fred Merkle, without whom the Cubs wouldn't have won their most recent World Series (1908), and Ray Chapman, the only player killed playing in the majors. Another writer, Allen Barra, satirized the reverential treatment, listing moments such as Jennifer Lopez jumping up in a halter top and yelling something in Spanish at Yankee center fielder Bernie Williams, and a 1966 home run bouncing off a Philadelphia street into an...

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