



By Paul S. Williams

May the Best Story Win

Marshall Leggett's article got me thinking this week. Every person has a story. Every people group has its story. Some stories are more compelling than others. The reasons are complex and varied.

The story of a Tampa Bay Devil Rays baseball fan wouldn't seem to hold as much hope as the story of a New York Yankees fan, although the Devil Rays fan might not agree. Hapless as he is, he might think his story of diehard allegiance to a team that's not going anywhere fast is more redemptive than rooting for a national powerhouse.

Anyone can do that. And who is to say he's wrong? You may wear whatever baseball cap you choose in America, and other than a little good-natured ribbing, you're likely to be left alone.

But now let's suppose our Tampa Bay fan feels compelled to convince everyone the Devil Rays' story is the best there is, and should be their story too. He believes Lou Piniella will turn things around in a single season, and he's gonna convince you to become a season ticket holder, no excuses. Well, now our fan might run into a little opposition. In fact, he's likely to be called a fanatic. Folks will filter his calls through their answering machines and roll their eyes when they hear his impassioned "Please pick up. I know

you're there. Now, about those Devil Rays . . ."

Now let's take the story one chapter further. Suppose a group of baseball analysts gets together for a preseason television special on the 2003 campaign. As a deeply respected and knowledgeable play-by-play announcer explains why the Yankees will, as always, be a force, our Devil Rays fan rushes the stage, grabs the microphone and says, "You can't say that. You can't say any team is better than the Rays." And suppose every other analyst in the studio decides to back up our Devil Rays fan. "Yes. Who is to say the Devil Rays aren't just as good as the Yankees or Cardinals or Angels or any other team. Who is to say?" And a long

and incredibly boring conversation ensues as the analysts discuss the equality and deceptively similar merits of every single major league team.

And now imagine our respected and knowledgeable baseball announcer as he scratches his head in bewilderment, and waits for the season to begin and the silly talk to stop, because he knows the truth. That truth comes from decades playing the game, studying the game, announcing the game, and living the game. And the truth is that some teams are better than others. And when the season ends, one story will stand above them all.

The truth is that some teams are better than others.

Seen & Heard

Compiled by S. J. Dahlman

"War is like chemotherapy.

The good and innocent cells are going to be killed along with the bad. But where there is a cancer that threatens to snuff out life, what is one to do but fight back? . . . Pacifism in the face of an evil onslaught, far from upholding the value of human existence, demonstrates an utter contempt for human life."

—Shmuley Boteach, rabbi, quoted in Beliefnet.com

"War is so devastating, so

morally odious in itself, that a nation must bend over backwards to be sure that all means short of war have been exhausted before it crosses that line. Even if we have little hope that talks with Saddam Hussein will be successful, they must be undertaken anyway. Otherwise, just war theory has no teeth—and we resort to war far too easily."

—David P. Gushee, quoted in Beliefnet.com

"The decisions that the president makes about war and peace

and about whether or not force needs to be used in Iraq are based on the president's judgments as a secular leader about what is necessary to protect this country. The president is a deeply religious man. But these are decisions that the president will make based on intelligence reports, based on information that he is aware of on how to protect our country from potential attack."

—White House spokesman Ari Fleischer, Feb. 6, 2003