



“THE CURSE.” IT’S FINALLY FOILED

By Kerry Schmidt 10-31-2004

First off, let me state that neither the syndicate nor any paper that carries my column has any affiliation with either the “New York Times,” or CBS.

Unfortunately, those two once highly respected journalistic entities have come to confuse stories – which are supposed to be truthful facts, with columns, wherein the writer can offer his/her opinion, as outlandish as it may be.

If I was connected to the “Times,” I would likely have been told to make this column sound like Boston lost.

But they did not! The curse of 86 years has been 86’d. The agony and horror are finally over.

How long has it been since the Red Sox won the Series? Arguably their most famous player, Ted Williams, was born in 1918, the last time the Sox won.

To buy a ticket for the last Boston WS win, you had to shell out \$3.30. Tickets for this win went for \$140.

Gone forever are the ghosts of Buckner and Bucky (Dent) and the Babe.

I will guess that just about everyone outside of greater St. Louis was rooting for the Red Sox, so most viewers saw a happy ending to history.

And, the timing and settings were apropos.

Had there been a game seven, it would have been tonight, Halloween.

There was a full moon on Wednesday night. There was also a total eclipse of the full moon during the middle of the game. It reached its apex just as the Red Sox scored the two final runs to make the (final) score 3-0.

The orangish glow that shone above the famous Green Monster and into fabled Fenway Park made the scene seem even all the more ghoulish.

And perhaps it was poetic justice that two of the four WS losses during the drought (’46 and ’67) were to the Cardinals, and of course they beat the Yankees to get there this year. Not only did the Red Sox exhume the ghosts of debacles past, they did so in the grandest of fashion, setting two records in the process.

No MLB team had ever come back from being down three games to none in a post season series to win. The Sox became the first to do so, and they did it against their hated Evil Empire nemesis, the Yankees. George Steinbrenner may put on his Donald Trump costume tonight and hand out pink slips instead of candy.

Then, the Sox defeated the favored Cardinals by sweeping the birds, thus becoming the first team in MLB history to win eight consecutive post season games in the same season. Hey, if you are going to exorcise demons past, why not do it in record style!?

A real irony was the TV shot in game 4 showing a Cardinal bull-pen pitcher using a broom to sweep off the pitching rubbers, as announcer Tim McCarver laughingly said “Wow, that might be a bad omen there.”

And to be sure, there were heroes, some likely, some not.

Sox left fielder Manny Ramirez was named the Series MVP. The same Manny Ramirez who was waived by 29 teams last season before the Sox took a chance on him.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Derek Lowe pitched seven shutout innings, giving up only three hits, to claim the historical Series clinching win. The same Derek Lowe who had been yanked from the starting rotation after a terrible September.

“Papi,” as DH/first baseman is lovingly called by Boston fans, had three home runs in the post season and knocked in the winning runs in three of the eight games.

And of course, “The Natural.” You had my new Mr. Tough-It-Out champ, Curt Shilling, doing his Robert Redford imitation to win both game 6 in the Yankee series and game 2 in the WS. 50 years from now there will still be framed pictures in the many bars of Boston of Shillings famous “red sock” on the Red Sox pitcher.

Like Redford in “The Natural,” the close-up shots of blood soaking through the sock on his right ankle will forever be embedded in Red Sox lore.

But perhaps the real heroes were the entire pitching staff. After Boston’s first game slugfest, 11-9 win, their pitching staff held St. Louis, which led the league with a team batting average of .279 during the season, to a feeble .192 average. The Cards scored all of three runs in their last 27 innings.

Baseball is a game of numbers, and none were more prominent than “8” and “6.”

It was an 86-year wait between wins. The last, and most memorable WS loss was in ’86, with the Buckner-ball-through-the-leg trick. There were a total of six despairing losses in that stretch. And finally, the great “8,” the eight straight wins to once and for all sweep the monsters from under their beds.

Boston, like New Orleans, is known as a good town in which to get a drink. I will guess that the absenteeism at work Thursday was pretty high, pardon the pun.

Now, the “other” curse. Maybe the Cubs can do something about 96. That is how long, back to 1908, since they last won the WS.