

As the red and gold confetti finally settles in Arizona following an intense Super Bowl showdown between the Philadelphia Eagles and Kansas City Chiefs, it's time to turn our attention back to America's original pastime. Major League Baseball is gearing up for its 148th season and I couldn't be more excited. In my opinion, baseball is the king of sports. It's a sport that, for the most part, has stayed the same since its inception (though nobody can agree exactly when that was and who was involved).

However, this year the sport has seen several rule changes: bigger bases, the ban on the shift, and, the most controversial, the implementation of a pitch clock. I won't give away how I feel about the new rule changes now, but I'll be more than happy to have that conversation with you at the Kirkland Town Library! All I am willing to share at the moment is that baseball is showing a willingness to adapt to reach a broader audience by giving more opportunities for action and speeding up the rate of play. The ramifications of these changes are yet to be determined, but it should make for a drama-filled season.

Baseball has been a part of my life since my parents enrolled me in a South Georgia rec league when I was 8 years old. I only played for one season, but my coaches told me that I could line out better than anyone on the team (in case you're unfamiliar, that isn't a positive) and if I “wasn't too busy counting the bugs in the grass I might be able to catch a few balls.” In other words, I stunk. Even though my baseball career was short, I was immediately hooked on the game. Every Sunday afternoon, we'd have a baseball game on the television while my mom finished cooking dinner and my dad napped. Everyday after school, my brother and I would play a few rounds of home run derby in the back yard with a metal bat and tennis balls, and on Saturdays we tried our best playing hardball with the neighbor kids until one of us got a black eye. Growing up my brother and I didn't do very much together or share the same interests, but we both had baseball. We still do.

When my wife and I moved to the Clinton area in 2017, I was convinced that I wouldn't be able to find opportunities to take in a game or have anyone to talk to about the sport. Clinton is Hockeyville, USA after all. Boy was I wrong! Not only is there a minor league team in Syracuse, we also have college baseball, the Utica Blue Sox, and the Baseball Hall of Fame less than an hour away. I've been to more live games in the past five years than I have in my entire life. Is this heaven? No. It's Central New York. Whether you're a Mets or Yankees fan, or your heart belongs to a team from a different part of the country (clears throat, “Go Braves!”), we can all agree that baseball is special and if you are a true fan, like me, you don't mind who is playing as long as you can experience it.

With the 2023 season's Opening Day right around the corner – on Thursday, March 30 at 1:00 p.m. to be exact – it's time to dust off Kirkland Town Library's collection of baseball related materials like Ken Burn's *Baseball* (1994), a must-watch documentary series for fans looking to be inspired, educated, and to say “Huh, I didn't know that” every ten minutes. You can also read about Utica's very own minor league baseball team when you check out Peter Pagliaro's *The 1947 Utica Blue Sox: A Baseball Season to Remember* (2022). Once the season has wrapped up and baseball's best teams begin to battle in the postseason, you should learn about the

“Buy Me Some Peanuts and Cracker Jack”

by Dennis May

origin of the game’s most coveted contest by reading Tyler Kepner’s *The Grandest Stage: A History of the World Series* (2022).

There are countless other titles written about the world’s greatest game, but I wouldn’t be able to fit it all in one newspaper edition, much less one newspaper column. Baseball’s history is rich, evolving, and can be accessed in any number of ways: books, movies, or documentaries. And most importantly baseball is for everyone. Come find me at the KTL’s front desk two days a week and I would love to chat about my favorite game.