

## RANDOM SAMPLES

# SPORTS FAN WANTS TO GET HIS WIFE INTO THE GAME

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I've been using baseball as a gateway drug. Not for me, but my wife.

It's all part of my secret plan to deal with an issue that many people face: significant others who could not care less about sports.

My wife has never been much of a fan - unless you count ice skating - but she happened to have an interest in the recently concluded World Series because she's from New York and her parents grew up in the Bronx. Aside from this, I've struck out in finding ways to engage the sports lover in her. She finds football barbaric and basketball uninteresting. I'm afraid to even mention hockey to her.

I, on the other hand, am a different story.

- In college, a friend and I became minor celebrities by going to hockey games with giant foam wedges of cheese on our heads. We called ourselves Chyzheads in honor of two brothers on the team with the last name Chyz.
- When it snowed on opening day of the 2007 baseball season in Cleveland, I insisted on staying through all 2 hours and 53 freezing minutes of delays before the game was officially canceled in the fifth inning. (One strike short of a no-hitter!)
- I still look forward to watching Cleveland Browns games. 'Nuf said.

My wife doesn't understand my undying love of sports, particularly when the teams I follow tend to be synonymous with heartbreak. She hears my anguished screams from the basement as I watch games on TV and wonders why I do it to myself. (Perhaps I should loan her my copy of the book, *Curses! Why Cleveland Sports Fans Deserve to be Miserable*.)

This is not to say there hasn't been some progress. Just being around, even if it's walking through the room while a game is on television or hearing me rant about it afterward, she's picked up some things, such as the importance of the Ohio State-Michigan game or the majesty of LeBron James.

Then the Yankees made the playoffs, and I saw a reason to hope for even more. Suddenly she tuned in to games on the radio on the drive home from work. Finally she planned her evenings around a first pitch.

Wanting to encourage even the tiniest smidgen of interest in sports, I made a point to watch almost every minute of every game with my wife, and it was wonderful. There's a certain bond, sometimes even a special language, that sports fans share and finally she was part of it.

We taught each other some important things during those hours together. Thanks to her observations, I now know that baseball players, especially Mariano Rivera, look a lot worse with their hats off. And thanks to me, she understands why we really needed that plasma TV.

Happy and together, we stared at the television for hours during those games, but what I remember most happened off screen. My wife looked over at me, grinning after her team got a crucial hit to complete a come-from-behind win, and said something like, "At times like these I can sort of see what you like so much about sports."



And so it begins.

I realize that there are some things she'll never understand, like how a tailgate before a college football game could begin at 10 a.m. with hot dogs, not bagels and cream cheese. In my dreams, though, this is the beginning of something.

My intent is not to change my wife or bribe her into doing something that she doesn't enjoy. My real hope is that now that she's felt that rush of adrenaline that only a sports junkie knows, she'll be hooked - or at least be open to a few more doses of this wonderful drug I know as sport.

It's OK if that takes time. I'm a patient man. After all, as a Cleveland fan I've been waiting for a championship my entire life.

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