

Bill Rea ? A game to remember

There's one certain fact that needs to be put up front before I get too far into this column.

It's Friday night, and I'm sitting in my basement with the TV on. And since there don't seem to be any good movies or professional wrestling available, my wife and I are watching a baseball game (no prizes for guessing which one).

I started this piece during the top of the second.

I should also point out that Beth is channel-hopping between the Jays and the Leafs playing in Columbus (the Leafs are currently winning 3-1).

But like many of you, my thoughts have been reflecting back on what went on last Wednesday night, when the Jays won their series against the Texas Rangers.

I am very glad that I saw that game, and hope I don't have to watch another match like that for some time.

Many, many stories came out of that match, especially in the seventh inning. I have even heard there are plans in the works to make a TV documentary about that inning. It would sure sell in Toronto. The reason for that is not so much that the Blue Jays won.

They've done that lots of times. But it's the way they did it.

If you're old enough, think back 43 years to that hockey series between Canada and the Soviets. That series is memorable because of the final game, in which Team Canada went into the final period down two goals and pulled off a miracle.

Canadians still remember that moment. If Team Canada had won all eight games, as had been expected, today it would all be trivia.

The reason so many of us remember that moment is because it went down to the wire.

That's pretty much what happened last Wednesday.

But there are a lot of other stories involved with the issue, including all that went on in the immortal seventh inning.

Let's see. There was a controversial call from the umpires (they happen), hometown fans got somewhat huffy (predictable) and pelted the field with debris (reprehensible, but also predictable), a baby got splashed with beer (could have been a lot worse), the Rangers pulled a series of boners in the field (their game to lose), Jose Bautista pulled everything out of the fire (shades of Paul Henderson) and flipped his bat away after admiring his handiwork (he's human). The Jays won.

First the call. The rule is in the books, and after a while, it was properly applied. My problem with it all was the home-plate umpire waved the play off while it was taking place, meaning the fielders would have stopped fielding. I know officials sometimes blow calls, and there are ways of making up for them. But I have never heard of a case where a point was awarded in such a situation. I guess there's a first time for everything.

The fans in the stands would have seen a Texas Ranger trot home and wondered why that was permitted. Those of us watching at home because we couldn't afford tickets were at least getting some information as to what was going on. Some people in the stands might have been able to get some details through social media, but most of the folks there would have been in the dark. It's not surprising that they would have been puzzled and even frustrated.

Did they have to throw stuff on the field? Of course not, but they did, and that is a common occurrence at sporting events when the fans are angry. What beats me is what people in the stands are doing with cans of beer. The last time I attended a game at the facility (three or four years ago), my beer was served to me in a plastic mug. A can even half filled with beer, thrown from an appreciable height, can do a lot of damage. And angry sports fans with enough beers in them are likely to do dumb things, like turn their beverages into missiles.

Fortunately, it seems it was just liquid that hit the infant in question. But that begs the question of what a kid like that was doing at such an event? Yes, I know that it was a public event, meaning the parents were well within their rights to bring their child there. But there is no way the kid is ever going to remember the experience. And since the mother had to deal with the needs of the infant, I have to wonder if she got anything from being at the game. The first time I attended a game at Rogers Centre (known then as the SkyDome) was April 23, 1994 (I remember the date because it was the day after former American president Richard Nixon died, and I entered the stadium wondering if there was going to be some public acknowledgement ? there wasn't). I think it was Minnesota that lost to the Jays that day. A man and woman missed the first couple of innings. They sat next to us, with their young girl, who was maybe three. I remember her dad reminding her to cheer for the Jays, and she responded by yelling ?YAY!? as loud as she could, which wasn't very loud. After about two innings, she was sound asleep, using part of Beth's lap as a pillow. She'd be in her mid-20s today, and probably has no memory of being at the game. It was early in the season and feelings wouldn't be running too high. Last Wednesday was a playoff, do-or-die affair, and rowdy fans were firing on all cylinders. Was that really the place for an infant?

But after things quieted down, the Rangers proceeded to blow it. Three errors in a row.

Bautista got his turn at the plate and launched a three-run rocket into the seats. He handled the situation the way most of us would have, I think he watched his hit fly away, then rejoiced. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that, despite what some observers might think. People who are upset over the way Bautista tossed his bat away really need to find something important to worry about. The Jays won last Wednesday, but they lost Friday, and Beth fell asleep before the game was over. I had to tell her the final score when I woke her up so she could go to bed. She had stopped channel-hopping, so it wasn't until the next morning that I learned the Leafs won. I also went to bed with this column unfinished. I completed it late Saturday afternoon, with the ball game on the TV. It's the top of the sixth, and the Jays are winning, and Beth is planning to watch the hockey game in the evening. At this stage, I'm confident of the coming fortunes of both teams, even if it doesn't all come together this year. But there are going to be lots of memories of that game last Wednesday. There are more memories coming

