

Earful World Series Win 11/04/2010 – By Todd Pound

This piece was written the day after a rather remarkable night of baseball celebration and late night ER visits.

So the Giants won the World Series. I actually saw this coming way back in spring. And I *never* see anything coming. Yet in April it felt faintly plausible that San Francisco could get to the World Series... if they made the playoffs. It was a tepid prediction but the closest I've ever come to sporting clairvoyance. I should have bet something somewhere.

But I've been busy. My older son is deep into a new up-and-down phase. He fell into a down spat in the late innings of game five as the televised and mismatched radio broadcasts pulled our attention away from the dinner table. Wyatt slouched, exaggeratingly neglected, with his chicken nuggets, ketchup, peas and corn arrayed around his moping head.

I was scoring the game. I hadn't done so in a while, but with little league approaching I figured I should practice. Plus, I wanted documentation, a meaningful way to look at all those strikeouts. In an effort to muster some interest or appreciation or happiness, I asked my oldest son to fill in Renteria's seventh inning diamond. Mumbling that he didn't care anymore, he grabbed the pencil and doodled vague, soft marks on the page before pushing the scorecard away. His forehead was back on the table when Brian Wilson, the articulate pirate clown closer, struck out Hamilton a few innings later.

I kissed him and his tiny brother and my wife. I was happy for my family, the municipality and this particular peculiar team. I immediately thought of second or third generation San Francisco Giants fans, the ones that were now calling their dads. I dialed mine.

"That was easy!" my dad exclaimed, "Fun team to watch."

“Piece of cake,” I replied, adding, “and ego free.” This Giants team is utterly likable, perhaps the first for San Francisco since sometime Before Clark. It has been a long while since the team lacked a distracting ego.

“Wyatt happy?” my dad asked.

“Wyatt is... well, maybe you should talk to him.” I held the phone to Wyatt’s ear (usually a call from Pop can pull him out of a rut). But he remained adamantly gloomy, and resisted talking, even to his grandfather. I tried to explain this new phase, how the even years all seem to possess a few months of drama. But I could hear the television on his end mix with the radio broadcast on mine. Both of us really wanted to catch all the post-game commentary, interpretations, interviews and celebration. We agreed to talk again tomorrow.

I sat and sipped the last of my Anchor Steam, as players were splashed with wretched Budweiser. I suddenly remembered it was trash night. I cursed that such an unglamorous routine would fall on the night the San Francisco Giants won their first World Series. As I hauled the three containers to the curb (up a steep San Franciscan driveway onto a steep San Franciscan hill), I noticed the blue bin was weighted by week’s worth of Anchor Steam and Liberty Ale Bottles (during the week of tense baseball, I superstitiously drank a lot of San Franciscan beer). The recyclables receptacle listed and leaned precariously on the sidewalk, looking as if it had consumed all the beer from the bottles within.

I could hear horns honking on the street below. I simply rubbed my hands together as the garage door closed on the night outside. I figured I was in for the evening. But by 10 it was clear that my youngest wouldn’t sleep. I put him in the car and went for a drive, his restlessness providing me an opportunity to survey the city’s celebration. The Mission district was rambunctious and frenzied. People begged for horns to be honked. A fire truck clamored down Valencia loaded with celebratory firefighters whooping from their truck’s many perches. Giant flags flapped. Every

hipster wore an article of orange to go with his or her black. My eight-month-old son fidgeted and cried in the backseat, rubbing his eyes with contorted and stuttering hands. I needed to keep driving.

He finally fell asleep on the curves up to Twin Peaks. I picked the destination so that I might get a glimpse of the city in its downtown entirety. I parked near an amber lamp that allowed me to keep an eye on the baby as I surveyed the scene between the bridges. Free of fog for a night, the Golden Gate's orange hue appeared more local, perhaps a little less international tonight. Panning right, Coit Tower, the Transamerica Pyramid, City Hall and a host of other monuments and buildings were bathed or topped in orange light. The wind swirled and it was relatively quiet and cold. Yet I could faintly hear the revelry below. The town looked and sounded like a winner.

I shivered without a coat. I sent a text to friends deep in the Mission, who were undoubtedly hugging strangers at the Homestead. Inside the car, the kid stirred. Not all was right.

I drove the baby to the ER at 3:30AM. My older son's current favorite song, Tia Cruz's "Dynamite," played behind an audio montage of highlights on KNBR. Had he been in the car, the song might've pulled him out of his mood. But he was home asleep of course. As was much of the city. Finally.

The visit to the ER confirmed an ear infection. I drove Everett home, armed with a prescription that needed filling. At a stoplight on Mission Street, a group of new fans, not the type to score or even discuss baseball a month ago, insisted I blare my horn. But the horn in my Volvo wagon is stubborn and difficult to trigger. Besides, Everett had finally fallen asleep in the back. The crowd was disappointed.

"C'mon," a drunk young woman yelled, "blow your horn! For the Giants. Woooo!"

My shoulders and eyebrows mimed “sorry.” But the apology was insincere. Instead, I wanted to explain that noise isn’t what makes a championship special. I wanted to remind her that rather than tooting one’s horn, we might all shut our eyes and forgive 2002’s disastrous outcome, they way ’04 allowed Red Sox fans to forgive Bill Buckner.

I’m not the only fan that favors quiet reflection of a well-played season against the backdrop of prior rough ones. Where were they tonight? That girl should go home and ring her parents,

“Mom, Dad, can you believe it!?”

I suppose some people simply aren’t raised with baseball as a religion.

The nearest 24-hour pharmacist was the cramped Walgreens in the Castro. This is a truly urban drug store, with tall, cavernous aisles carved into a twisted old floor plan. The pharmacist is behind thick glass, tucked into a ticket-booth sized room. I hand over the cryptically written prescription that only he can decipher. I sit at an orange chair, its upholstery battered and torn at the edge. My surroundings felt decidedly more like Candlestick than the Giant’s lavish new home.

While I waited, a large black transvestite entered, complaining of being woken by fireworks and sirens on Polk Street. She needed a sleeping pill prescription filled.

“Damn, it loud. I can’t sleep, baby. I guess the Giants did somethin’ special.”

And there it was. The perfect SF finale to the best SF season.

This is, really, the perfect city, team and time for a World Series Championship. The density and compactness of San Francisco allows emotions like happiness to spread easily, reaching every small alley and cramped stairwell. I recall a winter day when a

few flakes of snow fell, eliciting shouts of startled joy that echoed amongst the crammed apartments.

“It’s snowing! It’s snowing!”

Unlike the snowflakes that never reached the street, the arrival of this trophy will stick. It might cement the team in a town full of transplanted loyalties to far away franchises. Now the Giants are not underdogs or under-appreciated. The national media is aware of a team with inexplicably resolute young cannons and a phenomenal catcher to catch them. It is a team of textbook precision and oddball approaches.

Will it make this town a baseball town? Can it pull it parallel to its east coast cousin in Massachusetts? Probably not. Major League Baseball in San Francisco is merely a mid-twentieth century affair. The roots are far more serious and deep from Cincinnati eastward. But it’s a step in the right direction.

My wife and I went to see Tim Lincecum’s first game. At the time he was nicknamed “The Franchise” and not yet deemed “The Freak.” The gawky pitcher was a glimpse at a brighter future. Now that future is now and it’s somewhat bittersweet. I like sports teams at their unpopular nadirs, but I naturally want to see them succeed. But a championship means the hard-luck team you rooted for when they were losing 90 games ain’t ever coming back. And, believe me, you kinda start to miss that team when everyone is sportin’ a new hat. It’s hard to share. But it’s not like my grandparents were Giants fans, so I got no claim.

No, I’m enjoying this victory differently. As a dad, it’s a story to tell. This victory comes just 8 months after Everett’s birth. He’s clearly a charm like his brother. The first-born’s birth occurred just two months before the Red Sox World Series victory ended almost a century of heartbreak. My sons clearly arrive with gifts from the baseball gods. I can’t wait to tell them all about it.