



## **For Tradition, Bring on the Games**

By Bill Gosse

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A tradition is something worthwhile passed on from generation to generation, whereas a rut is viewed as a boring routine. Technically, a tradition is good, and a rut is construed as bad.

I've always tried my hardest to create new driving routes to and from places to avoid developing a rut. I know my wife has rolled her eyes on several occasions when I'm bound and determined to find a new path to her parents' home.

There are wonderful traditions worth celebrating in our everyday lives (Happy birthday Mom!) and in the world of sports, like the Little League World Series and the College World Series.

Aside from the Danny Almonte birth certificate incident in the 2001 Little League World Series, the sportsmanship displayed by players, coaches and fans at these events has been phenomenal.

There's one event I really look forward to for the tradition and pageantry, and that's the Summer Olympics.

Maybe it's because the respective games only occur every four years. Maybe it's because so many different countries are represented, bringing together cultures and customs from throughout the world. The color alone at the opening ceremonies is enough to get your attention, and then they cap it off with the emotional lighting of the flame.

I know as a child, I anxiously waited for the Olympics, looking forward to watching the late Jim McKay. He was synonymous with the Olympic Games, like Walter Cronkite was with the evening news. McKay had such a great way of passing along stories of perseverance and great sportsmanship – symbols of the Olympic Games.

Wrestler Rulon Gardner and his heroics at the 2000 games, Kerri Strug and her gutsy vault, landing on a severely sprained ankle, and the 2000 baseball team, behind the pitching of Ben Sheets, shutting out the highly favored Cuban national team, are great underdog stories.

During the 1988 games, Canadian yachtsman Larry Lemieux was racing toward a medal when he noticed the boat from Singapore had capsized in rough waters and two crew members were in trouble. He immediately went to their aid, forfeiting any chance of winning a medal.

In the 2000 Sydney Games, an African swimmer, dubbed Eric the Eel, could swim barely 50 meters. Most people in the stands were better swimmers than he was, yet they cheered every stroke as if he were on his way to a gold medal. Awesome sportsmanship!

A small number of Olympic athletes have done their best to tarnish the games through illegal doping of some form or another.

It is well-documented how the East German swimmers cheated to win every race but two at the 1976 Montreal Games, and Marion Jones is the most recent athlete to have her illegal ways exposed.

Nonetheless, on August 8, the wonderful traditions of the Olympics continue. I can't wait for incredible stories of underdogs and sportsmanship.

Let the Games begin!