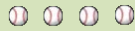


NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE



SEASON XXXVII



2020 HSL Champion
West Des Moines Cubs
Manager: Shamu

400

FROM THE BULLPEN

2021 Campaign

Edition No. 4

March 12, 2021

Brethren,

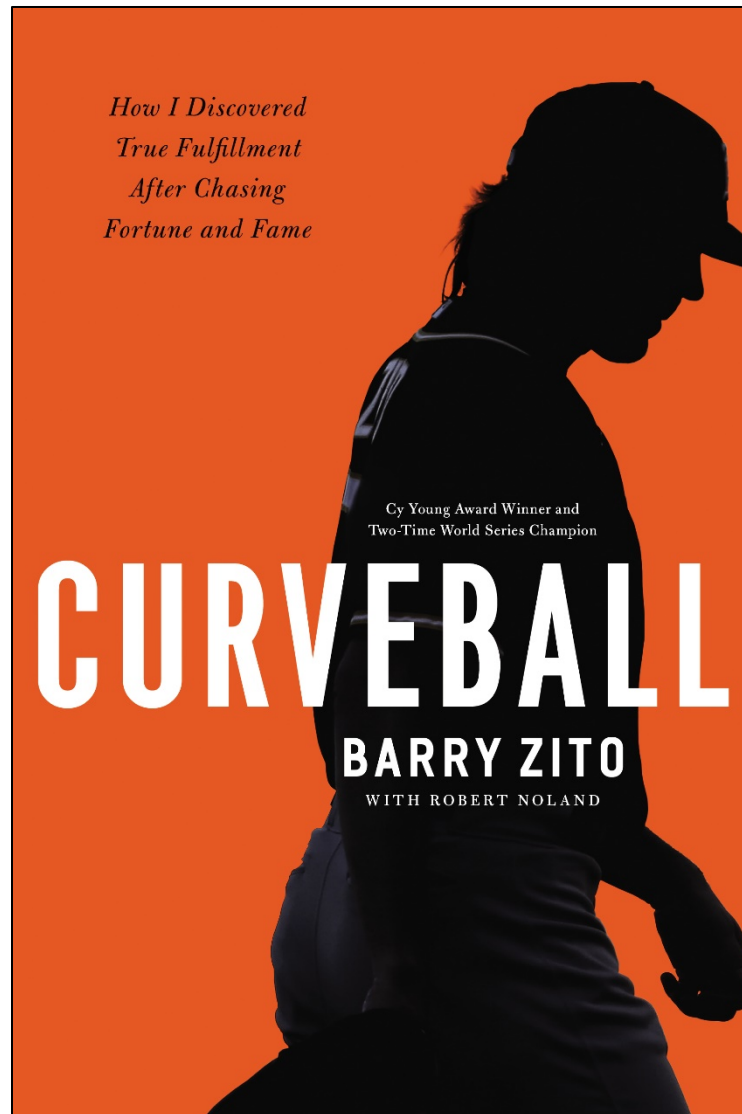
Got my first dose of the vaccine, and I didn't even have to jump the line. Age does have its privileges. And Mr. Rogers was right--it's a beautiful day in the neighborhood.

Okay, I'm in a great mood because I'll soon be fully vaccinated and that means a return to our *Opening Day* tradition. This year, with a little luck, it's Beantown and Fenway Park. Or as Matt Damon would say, *Fenway Pawk*. The Orioles of Baltimore will be in town for a Thursday afternoon, April 1, season opener. Play ball!

BOOK REPORT: CURVEBALL By Barry Zito

I recently finished reading Barry Zito's¹ book about himself, *Curve Ball: How I Discovered True Fulfillment After Chasing Fortune and Fame*.

¹ *With* Robert Noland, which of course means *by* Robert Noland.



Talk about a flake. I had never heard this about him before, but Zito used about every kind of recreational and illegal drug known to man before he had even graduated from high school, and it was not until he started seriously thinking about baseball as a career and performing for college recruiters that he started to clean up his act. Sired by a controlling father who was 50 years old when Zito was born--and who seemingly earned little or nothing as a musician and musician's agent--and birthed by a mother who was the pastor of some sort of New Age, non-Christian church (curiously named *Teaching the Inner Christ*, or T.I.C. for short), Zito entered the world in Las Vegas but grew up in spartan living conditions in the El Cajon (San Diego County) area, and he was what I would call a whack job by the time he made his major league debut on July 22, 2000.

While Zito really only had what I would call one outstanding year on the mound,² his timing was impeccable, and he was able to ink an enormous contract with the aid of Super Agent Scott Boras. As it turns out, Zito's career was just about to take a spasmodic turn into the crapper, and the pressure he would put on himself to live up to his huge contract eventually led to his career undoing, and he has been labeled by many as one of the biggest busts ever.

After turning to every type of psychologist, therapist, trainer, shrink, mystic, charlatan, mountebank and quack known to mankind, Zito eventually and finally turned to The Jesus for support, guidance and strength. Too bad he didn't start out in the general direction of Christianity. He is now married to a Christian from Missouri and they have two sons, Mars and Mercer. Yep.

In any event, while *Curve Ball* was one of the breeziest and easiest³ books that I have read for quite a while, it's not one of the more memorable. But if that melts anyone's butter and you are interested in borrowing my copy, let me know.

THIS 'N' THAT



I can confidently assert that nobody--that's right, NOBODY--wastes more time than me attempting to log in to a certain account, failing, trying again with the same password, failing, checking my password, changing my password, failing, checking my username, changing my username, failing, and then eventually either reaching my account or just giving up for the day, my blood pressure dangerously elevated. Is it just me?



Has anyone heard of investing in NFTs (non-fungible tokens) and things like TOPSHOT or CryptoKitties? It's a scary world.



Today is Day 50 of the POTUS 46 administration. Can we all agree that:

1. Competency matters; and
2. The truth is SO refreshing?

Just saying.

NEXT ISSUE

Three Days at the Brink--a fantastic book about the Tehran, Iran conference with FDR, Churchill and Papa Joe Stalin approving of Operation Overlord.

Skipper

² Zito went 23 and 5 in 2002 with a 2.75 ERA at age 24. He had 182 strikeouts and walked 78 batters. He had only one complete game.

³ For one thing, the print size and vocabulary used were roughly equivalent to my first grade "See Spot Run" primer, so there was that.