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As we live and work

Playing to win: Gems of wisdom taken from the diamond

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"For someone whose roots in America were strong but only inches deep, and who had no experience of an awesome hierarchy that was real and felt, baseball was a kind of secular church that reached into every class and region of the nation and bound millions upon millions in common concerns, loyalties, rituals, enthusiasms and antagonisms. Baseball made me understand what patriotism was about, at its best." -- Philip Roth

In contrast to the painful and seemingly endless war in Iraq, the arrival of spring -- and with it, baseball -- provides a wonderful sense of hope. There is something about the game that transports us from a world of ambiguity and confusion to one defined by a set of clear rules and a sense of order.

For many, it stirs up memories of happy times shared with loved ones. And the ballpark provides a legitimate venue where people of totally different backgrounds, who have held their feelings in check during the long months of winter, can now let go without maintaining a charade of being cool and in control.

Each game has a different twist. But they all end the same way.

After the battle is completed, there is only one winner and one loser. After a loss, there is another game tomorrow. And after a season when the results are not favorable and people hang their heads low, there is yet another season. Infinite hope in an infinite universe.

Like no other sport, baseball has spawned a number of stories and one-liners that have wisdom applicable to life and the world of business.

Here are a few that we have collected from players, coaches, and writers as well as the Bard himself, who wrote the following in "Julius Caesar," probably after the Alex Rodriguez trade deal collapsed: "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now."

- "Experience is a hard teacher, because she gives the test first and the lessons after." -- Vernon Law. The lesson: Bank the lessons and you'll pass the test.
- "If you have some good horses you can win the race, but you can't win anything with a bunch of mules." -- Eddie Moore. The lesson: Recognize the importance of talent.

- "You can observe a lot by watching." -- Yogi Berra. The lesson: Paying attention pays dividends.
- "The only mistake I made in my career was hitting .361 one year, because ever since then people have expected me to keep on doing it." -- Norm Cash. The lesson: Manage expectations.
- "You're expected to be perfect the day you start, and then improve." -- Umpire Ed Vargo. The lesson: Set realistic goals.
- "A person should always hold something in reserve -- a surprise to spring when things get tight." -- Christy Mathewson. The lesson: Understand the importance of contingency planning.
- "You have to learn before you're older. You can't hit the ball with the bat on your shoulder." -- Umpire Bill Byron. The lesson: No risk, no gain.
- "It ain't bragging if you can do it." -- Dizzy Dean. The lesson: Performance really does count for something.
- "All I can remember on my wedding day is that the Cubs lost a double-header." -- George Will. The lesson: Put priorities first.
- "It's a mere moment in a man's life between the all-star game and the old timers' game." -- Vin Sculley. The lesson: Time passes so fast for us all on and off the diamond.
- "The sun don't shine on the same dog's butt all the time." -- Jim "Catfish" Hunter. The lesson: No one is always a winner.
- "To err is human, to forgive is to be a Red Sox fan." -- Unknown. The lesson: Deal with reality.

And so we begin another season of hope. From the beginning of April to the finale in October, we are all united in sharing the ups and downs of our team. Once again, William Shakespeare, who died more than 200 years before Abner Doubleday was born, puts the long hard season in perspective with this from "Troilus and Cressida:

"The end crowns all; and that old common arbitrator, time, will one day end it."

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