

Pickup Ball

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For me, baseball was not about
perfectly manicured infields
megawatt sound systems
climate controlled domes
overpriced concessions
and endless pitching changes
interrupted periodically by
ten seconds of action.

For me, baseball was about
pickup games on an asphalt field
with painted baselines
crushed soda can bases
and a chain-link backstop.

It was about
screaming one-hoppers
caught in the palm of
my garage sale fielder's mitt
causing me to discard
both glove and ball
while I hopped and flapped
that stinging left hand
like it was on fire
as the batter rounded first.

It was about
pitcher's hand
ghost runners
and right field automatic outs
for lack of enough players.

For me, it was never about
multimillion dollar contracts
superstar endorsements
and twelve-dollar beers.

It was about
bringing your own bat
sharing your glove
and four fouls is an out.

It was about
kids playing a kids' game
purely for the love of it
on a summer day.