

Changing leagues is sort of a surreal thing, as I know I'm part of the same league, same hobby, same rules, etc., but there will be some major changes as well. So since I'm tired of seeing nothing but articles posted on the website lately, I have come up with the top ten reasons I will be sorry to leave the American League.

10 - Consistency of Jami, Richard & Randy - Ever since I got into the league as a fill-in manager in the in the 1986 season, these were folks I played. Pat Jennings and Jim Proffitt have changed leagues and Don wasn't in the AL before, so these guys were the real link to the past that didn't change over the eight years I was gone.

9 - Danny Graves - It sure was good to know that even though the Rampage was winning the game, Graves was coming in to pitch the ninth inning and give me a decent shot at catching up.

8 - Brooke Easton - Jeff's youngest daughter has the personality and charm of my younger daughter mixed with the inquisitiveness of my older daughter. She would always be interested in the games we were playing and in talking to us, mostly while I was on some insane stretch of slaughtering Jeff's team. Watching Jeff trying to be the calm and instructive father while dealing with multiple runs scored by the likes of Jason Tyner and Tom Lampkin makes for fantastic entertainment.

7 - Jerry's Coffee - This never occurred to me in the '80s, because I never touched the stuff. But now that I'm into coffee, I realized that no one I ever played has wanted to drink it or offer it. I remember Jerry's surprise when I offered him some, and his double-take when he offered me Sprite at his house and I asked for the coffee I could smell him making instead. I don't know if any of the NL guys do coffee or not.

6 - Derek Jeter - Now I don't particularly like the guy, and if you've ever sat still for long enough in my presence you've probably heard me whine about how the shortstop with the worst defensive range in the game always gets a 2 because he's Derek Jeter the Yankee. Having said that, the guy always seems either to strike out or hit the double play. On top of that, he just seems to be a natural magnet for those 1 and 2 rolls on the X-chart. I only wish some of those 4's in the outfield were that accommodating.

5 - Charlie's Perplexed Looks - Somehow, even though I don't blow him out, I always get that little timely hit in extra innings against Charlie that leaves him shaking his head and doubting his manhood as I find another stranger way to win a game that he thought was in the bag.

4 - Tim's Strat Room - It sure is great to be deep into a game and when you realize that some big event just took place in the game on the big screen TV, Tim can do the Ti-Vo thing and replay it.

3 - Mike's Rally Stuff - Over the last two years Mike has tried dice, brownies, dogs, grandchildren, everything he can come up with to capture the magic of the rally dice. I don't think there has ever been anyone that has tried harder to understand all my silly dice rules and make sense out of them.

2 - Randy's Charting - Over the years my dice have always thoroughly vexed Randy. But rather than fuss (threatening to kill Pat Jennings' entire family in 1988) or politely kick me out his house after I win three straight (so he can get to bed at the late hour of 8:45PM on a Friday night in 1990), Randy has resorted to charting me. When we play, we can usually tell by about the third inning of the first game what kind of a night it's going to be. If more than a couple ones are popping up (see Derek Jeter, above) I'll look over to see a sheet of paper with Randy making little tick marks each time I roll a 20. I thought about charting his rolls once, but I always notice that he rolls plenty of ones on Omar Vizquel, his two's on the 1 or else hits, and he seems to save all his 20's for stealing bases or rolling 1-16 homers.

1 - Richard's Frustration - Ever since I was an expansion team, Richard has always thought he's had a better team, and he usually did. So he figured he should always beat me, and he usually did. But that wasn't enough - he thought he should always blow me out, and that seldom ever happened. Many times Richard would fuss and whine about having to use relievers and pinch hitters, plus fussing that he had to examine my cards. When I had only been back from Texas for a week and played my first games with Jami's team, I promptly beat Richard two out of three and he made plans to drive to North Carolina so he wouldn't have to play me again. Even when I lost four out of five, it seemed like a victory because Richard was so flustered.

Since I was so long and lamenting about the things I will miss about the American league, you have to remember that I'm now the NL president, so we have some league pride issues here. In that spirit, here are the top ten things that I WON'T miss about the American League.

10 - DH - I really enjoy the strategy and double-switching that takes place in the NL, as well as the advance planning that is necessary for late in the game. The DH is pretty boring, and needs to be done away with in real life as well as in Strat.

9 - Barry Bonds - Although I never really let him hurt me that much, and Richard just gave up and rested him every time Trachsel pitched, I don't like altering strategies or planning around one player like that. Even if there was a ten run difference in the game, I felt insulted if Bonds homered...like it was really hard to do anyway in a 1-18 ballpark (and yes, he did miss one against me).

8 - Scheduling Jami - Since my job had a ridiculous amount of travel in 2002 and I got pulled off my current job for the "summer sabattical" in Indiana this year, getting games played on time can be a little hairy. Trying to coordinate a schedule with someone else who basically lives in another state when I'm handicapped by my own travel schedule is frantic. Sometimes it was absolutely amazing that we got them all in, albeit with a little help from Mike P at season's end.

7 - Keeping up with the Joneses - Speaking of scheduling, it sure is frustrating when I would be all proud of myself for meeting a deadline two or three weeks early, only to learn that I'm thirty games behind everyone else. Sometimes AL stands for Absent of a Life!! It's supposed to be an eight month season - what had you guys been planning to do in the last FIVE of those months if you're already done playing?

6 - T-Birds Pitching Staff - I was always a believer in Strat that if you consistently hold the other team to less than three or four runs, you will do better than to go 4-12 against them. I only scored 39 runs in 16 games (2.4 per game), as opposed to 4.6 runs per game against the rest of the league.

5 - Smokers - it doesn't matter how polite the guys are who smoke (and they all are extremely polite about it), my daughters complain. Thinking off the top of my head, I don't remember any NL managers who smoke these days.

4 - Roger Clemens - this is probably too low on the list, but since number 2 also related to Randy I like to space these things out a bit. Clemens was a menace to the Lawgivers back in the '80's and 90's, and everything but the dog at Randy's house is named after him (Hmmm...didn't DaVinci do some kind of experimenting with ROCKET power though? Might be more of a connection there than I thought). Anyway, the guy is still on Randy's team and he even manages different for him than he does the other pitchers. Plus, seeing as how he's a Yankee, they'll probably waive retirement and keep giving him cards for years. I can see him now on the pitching mound with a walking stick...which he uses to whack Mike Piazza.

3 - No Restaurants near Tim's house - I'm not going to complain about driving the distance out there for three reasons: (1) Tim gets a complex about it; (2) Tim has yet to complain about traveling the equal distance to my house; (3) I

leave straight from work, so it doesn't take any longer than stopping home, eating, and driving a few miles to play someone else. But since I'm leaving from work, I like to stop for dinner along the way. Now on my side of the continent, we have assortments of fast food restaurants and the like where people stop at a clean, well lit place for reasonably decent sustenance. Unfortunately, if I eat on this side of the universe traffic is such that I don't know how delayed I might be - so I choose to stop after I pass the airport and I've struck out each and every time. There's only one exit with food you don't have to stick in a microwave yourself, and they even managed to ruin a Subway because as I was next in line the guy in front of me ordered twelve sandwiches and one of the two employees saw a COOL car in the parking lot and ran out to ask the driver about it for fifteen minutes.

2 - Rally Gas - The first time I played at Randy's house this year, he was having a late inning rally, and I smelled something. I don't remember what I had had to eat that night, but my first impulse was that I needed to check my pants. No problem there, and I was starting to think that Randy was a little too excited about this suddenly tense game. Finally, I realized that Randy's dog was having a gastro-intestinal event of a rather impressive magnitude. Now although the rally faded much sooner than the smell did, Davinci (unlike Mike P, who realizes when an imitation good luck charm isn't working and stops) remains convinced that he's helping Randy's cause and tries this stunt again and again when I'm there.

1 - Richard's cup - I don't think I've ever played Richard that at sometime he hasn't gotten frustrated enough to break out the dice cup. It just sort of brings images to the mind - especially since I have always equated dice to uniforms (you know - home, away, special events, etc.). I can just picture Richard's team taking the field, although all the players are running rather slowly to their positions as they are encumbered by these huge oblong shaped athletic cups they are wearing. Hey - from what I hear about the effects of steroids on that part of the manhood, at least it would dispel those rumors of Barry Bonds and his chemical supplements (and here you thought I had gone wacky with the title of this article).

But seriously, as you can tell by the lack of space between my cheek and tongue, I will miss playing you guys and I can't wait for the interleague play to start up.