

Sports Op-Ed

I have never been one who's much for sports. I didn't play any as a child, except perhaps for the occasional losing game of tag during recess, and I didn't grow up with a sports-loving father who patiently took the time to explain a game's complex myriad of rules. My foreign-born mother clicked her tongue and turned off the television whenever a sporting event happened to dominate the airwaves.

But for some reason, for the first time in my life, I can't stop watching the Tigers-Cardinals World Series playoffs. My addiction started last Monday, when I woke up and noticed first my neighbor, then the gas station attendant, dressed from head to toe in red and white cardinals regalia. When I got to work at the University of Missouri, where I teach, my morning class of students eagerly delayed lecture by informing me of the St. Louis upset over favored Detroit in the first game of the series. After lecture, intrigued, I got on the internet and began reading about the teams. Detroit has the favored pitchers, but St. Louis has experience from being in the World Series just two years before, Detroit is scrappy, but St. Louis has passion, Detroit, St. Louis, Detroit, St. Louis...

I was born in Detroit - and not in some rich suburb of Detroit, like Southfield, or Birmingham, or West Bloomfield - but downtown Detroit, where my father was mugged a half-dozen times walking from his car in the driveway to the steps of our front door, but where I spent innumerable afternoons with my mother at the educational children's events hosted by the Detroit Institute of Arts. In my early twenties, after college, I left Detroit and lived for a while first in Los Angeles, then in Bozeman, Montana, and just two years ago I came back to the Midwest and settled in St. Louis. I barely know my new town - I still get lost trying to find the 44 and getting on the 40 instead, and when people tell me to shop at Schnucks, I still can't help thinking that's a ridiculous name for a grocery store. But if you ask me who I am rooting for in this exciting World Series, I answer without a moment's hesitation: St. Louis. I love my history and I love my past, and I will always be grateful to Detroit for giving me such an exceptionally rich and memorable upbringing, but St. Louis is my home now and St. Louis is the seat of my future. I tend

to look ahead, not behind.

Too much lately, in reading the news or in talking to friends, there is a focus in this country on a mistaken obsession with the past. The errors we've made in Iraq, rather than a plan for helping that country achieve a better future. The way this country was before all the illegal immigrants flooded in, instead of how we can integrate those immigrants into full members of society. Too much nostalgia for ineffective health care, assembly-line manufacturing jobs, and little competition with and trade from China. And I'm tired of it. I look forward to innovations in science, high quality jobs, and new products from overseas, because I look forward to the future. I refuse to be cowed by the past and I am instead optimistic for the future - because I live in a great town, with a great ball team, surrounded by truly great people. Good luck Detroit, but Go Cards!