

SUPERSTITIONS

Yanks, fans, baseball gods

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The Red Sox and their followers have the Curse of the Bambino, but the Yankees and their fans can be superstitious, too, paying homage to the Gods of Baseball when the going gets tough.

Consider the ballplayers first:

David Wells, who pitched a perfect game for the Bronx Bombers, wore the same baseball cap every day of the season, including when the Yankees won the 2000 World Series versus the Mets.

Certain Yanks, like Derek Jeter, won't set foot on the foul line when they take the field, considering it bad luck to do so.

Wade Boggs, who played for the Yankees when the team won the 1996 World Series and for the Red Sox for many years before that, used to eat the same meal of boiled chicken and string beans at the same time - 3 p.m. - before heading to a night game.

"Players are extremely superstitious because they play almost every day and search for ways to help them repeat the good ones," said Maury Allen, who chronicled such mysticism when he was a New York City sportswriter.

The aura often carries into the stands.

Television broadcaster Bob Costas carries for good luck a Mickey Mantle baseball card he acquired when he was a boy. (Then again, did he forget to bring it with him on Monday and Tuesday, when his team lost?)

Dan Monaghan, 34, of Bellport, who says he watches Yankees games holding a ball, which he also rubs, signed by Derek Jeter, Bernie Williams and Mariano Rivera to bring the Bronx Bombers luck.

Arnie Rind, 57, of Woodbury, said he has carried on a superstition practiced by his late first wife. She never ate during the game.

Also, during rallies, he cannot move from room to room or deviate from whatever he was doing during the rally.

Connie Crowder, 33, of Farmingdale, smiled and chatted with friends as a stuffed Derek Jeter doll sat propped against two packs of Marlboro lights on the table in front of her.

She has been bringing the doll to watch the games with her since 1996 with one exception. On Sunday she forgot him and the Yankees lost. She won't do that again.

"I never lose when he's with me," she said. "I'm a little superstitious."



Sox fans cling to superstitions during Series

Saturday October 23, 2004

BOSTON (AP) -- It wasn't just the clutch hitting of David Ortiz, or the gallant performance of Curt Schilling or the collective effort of the bullpen that propelled the Boston Red Sox to their first World Series berth in nearly two decades.

Surely the old undies and unshaved faces helped, too.

"I got a heads-up penny just now, and I found a heads-up penny the morning we went down to New York for Game 7," 18-year season ticket holder Larry Smith said, alighting at the good omen as he waited Saturday to enter Fenway Park for the first game of the World Series against St. Louis.

For Smith, Red Sox-related superstitions don't stop at a lucky coin.

He refuses to eat sausage before a game (it makes the Sox lose); He gives credit to a now stadium-stained "We Believe in the Idiots" banner he made when Boston trailed the New York Yankees 3-0 -- then carried with him to the next four games of the league championship series. And he dressed Saturday in precisely the same outfit that he's worn the past four Sox wins.

"I did wash it between series, and I wasn't sure I should," said Smith, 47, of Concord. "If they lose, I'll never forgive myself."

In a sport with a rich history of superstitions, fans and players alike are doing their own tiptoeing over foul lines to ensure no bad luck comes between them and their first World Series championship since 1918.

Red Sox manager Terry Francona claimed he does not have any superstitions, though he acknowledges trying hard not to break routine when things are going well.

"When things are going good, I don't do anything different," he said. "That's sort of covering my rear end."

Like many pitchers, Schilling has what he calls "quirks" in his game-day preparation. He doesn't like to give specifics, because -- perhaps superstitiously -- "if I tell you, then it stops being one."

"I never look at a lot of the stuff I do as superstition,"

said Schilling, who conscientiously steps over foul line as he goes to and from the mound. "All of the quirks I have on game day are nothing more than anything that just makes me comfortable."

Routine and superstition have long been part of baseball.

Third baseman Wade Boggs, who played for Boston, Tampa Bay and New York, always fielded the same number of ground balls during warm-ups, and always ate chicken before each game.

And two-time AL batting champion Nomar Garciaparra, who was traded from the Red Sox to the Chicago Cubs in July, inspired an entire generation of youngsters to mimic his batter's box ritual of adjusting his batting gloves just-so.

Brian Auzzola, 32, of Norwood, insists on watching games alone, on his couch -- and in quiet. He's particularly concerned about ensuring his wife doesn't ask him anything during a game.

"She'll ask questions like, 'How long as it been since they won?'" he said, shaking his head.

Marc Colizzi, 30, of Salem, N.H., showed off a few days' growth of beard as he and his brother, Chris, 26, of Haverhill, headed into Fenway on Saturday.

"I started growing my beard, and they went down 3-0," he said. So he shaved.

"Because Johnny Damon had two home runs in Game 7, I started growing it back," said Colizzi, who noted he also was wearing the same boxer shorts he wore when the Patriots won the Super Bowl in 2002.

For some fans, be it keeping routine or superstition, they are careful not to tempt fate; they know the consequences.

"I blew it in 1986," Smith said, referring to the Red Sox loss to the New York Mets in their last World Series. "I popped the cork when we were one strike away."