

SoCal vs. NoCal? No Contest

The Best Rivalry in Sports Heats Up

By Chris Brown and Casey Shearer

It's the latter half of September, which means the fall breezes are blowing and the leaves are changing. The smell of hot-dogs and stale beer is in the air; everybody wants peanuts and Crackerjacks; children run home from school and head to the sandlot. All of which are symptoms of pennant fever. Or at least they should be. But as we look around, nobody seems to care about baseball at all. In what is usually the most exciting time of the year for baseball fans, that special excitement is somehow absent. Even as Mark McGwire and Ken Griffey Jr. chase Babe Ruth and Roger Maris, and Larry Walker chases the triple crown, something is missing: What's missing, kosher hot-dogs? A players' strike? Roy Hobbs? Steve Howe and his crack? The Cubbies? Has baseball become so unpopular so as to lose the interest of all its fans? Is it just that baseball lacks that type of hype, flashy color and big-money that basketball purports or the bone crushing thrills of football? No, what's missing are those heated races that lead to a bad case of pennant fever. With less than two weeks remaining in the season, the playoff picture is all but set in stone. In the American League, Baltimore owns the East, Cleveland looks to have the Central wrapped up, Seattle should win the West barring a major collapse, and the Bronx Bombers have sewn up the wild card. The National League East has become the permanent property, just like the NL Cy Young award, of the Atlanta Braves, the Central is the Astros' to lose, and Florida will win the wildcard. The only real race left in baseball is in the NL West between the Los Angeles Dodgers and the San Francisco Giants.

Ready to Rumble

The Dodgers vs. The Giants, perhaps the fiercest rivalry in all of baseball, is this enough to give all those waiting baseball fans even a little case of the sniffles? It's fitting that the only race left in baseball is between the Dodgers and the Giants. If you could choose one race to watch throughout baseball history, this would be it. This rivalry goes back to the days of the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants, Ebbets Field and the Polo Grounds, Bobby Thompson's shot heard round the world, and Willie and the Duke. The Dodgers and Giants have hated each other from the beginning of time. Whether it's Juan Marichal going gangsta' on John Roseboro with a bat, or Dusty Baker mouthing off about the Dodgers? heart this year, there is no love lost between these two squads. This season the gritty overachieving Giants have surpassed all expectations, having led the NL West for most of the season, and not faltering after briefly being passed by the Dodgers. This year's version of the Los Angeles baseball team has been labeled heartless and lacking chemistry due to the IHOP: their international house of pitchers. The opposite of the Giants, the Dodgers have been labeled underachievers. This leaves us with a circumstance of contrasts: a no-lose situation for the G-men and a no win situation for LA. If the Giants prevail, they get the credit of doing what no one thought they could do; if they lose, they were not supposed to anyway. If the Dodgers win, they did not do anything extraordinary; if they lose, somebody loses their job, whether it's manager Bill Russel, GM Fred Claire or some of the players. The Dodgers, therefore, are playing with a sense of desperation which just adds to the beauty and tension of the race, giving each game the feeling of a must-win situation. Throw into

the drama the hatred of Los Angeles that most San Franciscans have and you 've got something really special.

The Future is Blue

Los Angeles and San Francisco are the only two worldly cities on the west coast and there is, filtered into a sense of companionship that the two have for each other, a feeling of serious competition. Both are tremendously exciting cities, San Francisco because there is so much packed into so little space, and Los Angeles because it is so large and expansive. Both cities, in most respects, host some of the best cuisine in the world, and are so worldly as to accept any and all types of people. So here we have these two gargantuan world-class cities who are represented by their exciting teams and sluggers (Piazza and Bonds) facing off, teeth bared and claws sharpened. Warning: don't wear your good clothes for this one. And watch out San Francisco, with the Lakers out of the spotlight and no NFL team to focus on, Los Angeles wants this one. And anyway, San Francisco might have the best Chinese, but LA has better Piazza. So now that the stage is set, we are ready to watch and wonder which team will find a way to pull it out. Well, we're here to put an end to all the controversy and arguments because there is only one team that can possibly win the NL West. And that team is, drum roll please. The Chicago Cubs. Whoops, we're sorry, I guess we should stop smoking all that crack. In all actuality, it is simply an indisputable fact that the Los Angeles Dodgers will win the NL West.

Why, you may ask. How can we be so sure? Then tell you we will. Once you finish reading, mind what you have learned, as it will lead to salvation. (at least from making an ass of yourself in front of an obviously superior intellect known as a Dodger fan). 9 reasons the Dodgers will beat the Giants and win the National League West:

1: Mike Piazza

The man is simply the most valuable player in the game today. He's third in the NL in batting, has over 35 homers and over 110 RBI. Stats don't lie and neither does the fact that Piazza plays the most physically demanding position in baseball and still gets up and delivers every time he bats. He handles the second best pitching staff in baseball flawlessly.

2: Chan Ho Park

He can pitch and he's a national hero. Every South Korean stops what they're doing and watches Dodger baseball when Chan Ho pitches. How can the Dodgers lose with all of Korea rooting for them, not to mention all of Japan as well? Dodger Stadium is the only stadium with a noodle shop.

3: Rod Beck

The man is as ugly as can possibly be and he's simply a gas can. He doesn't put out the fire, he just pours more gas on it. The bullpen is a Giant weakness and a Dodger strength. This should help the Dodgers pull out the division.

4: Starting pitching

The Dodgers have the best staff in baseball this side of Atlanta. The Giants have Chicago White Sox rejects. (By the way, up yours Jerry Reinsdorf.)

5: Eric Young and Otis Nixon

These two give the Dodgers the speedy tablesetters at the top of the lineup that they've sorely been missing the last few seasons. Nixon and Young have energized LA and given Mike Piazza more RBI opportunities, and when Mike comes up with men on, they score.

6: Vin Scully

The best announcer in baseball. Bar none (and we're not talking about William Floyd).

7: History

Everybody remembers the Dodgers vs. The Yankees, not the Giants vs. The Yankees. When was the last time the Dodgers won the World Series? 1988. When was the last time the Giants won the World Series? Uh, do you remember Willie Mays? When was the last time the Giants went to the World Series? Uh, the sixties? When was the last time the Giants made the playoffs? Urn, gee I really don't know.

8: God

Or as former Dodger manager and the man who bleeds Dodger Blue, Tommy Lasorda, likes to call him, the big Dodger fan in the sky. And hey, the sky is blue too.

9: NoCal vs SoCal

NoCal has been, is, and always will be, SoCal's bitch. It's just the way it works because NoCal hella (what a stupid NoCal word) sucks. They carry "Beat LA" signs, have you ever seen a "Beat SF" sign?, Nuff said .

Chris Brown B:00 and Casey Shearer B:00 are SoCals for life.