

Spring is Season of Hope in Sports

Written by Stacey Hough, Columnist
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March is here, and with it comes warmer weather, longer days, and especially for many sports and the fans that love them, a season to be very optimistic about the future. "Hope springs eternal" is a line from a work of literature entitled *An Essay of Man*, written by Alexander Pope in 1733, and today "hope" and "spring" are seemingly synonymous. Sports fans have a buffet of subjects and scenarios to be hopeful for during this time of year.

In the world of baseball, major league teams are in spring training at this time of year. Every new player on each roster enjoys a honeymoon period, no mistakes have been made, and for the most part good mental and physical health are in effect. Most importantly, every team is undefeated, and fans can turn over in their minds exactly how their squad can win the World Series. Even in the college ranks, the season is relatively young, and hope is there for fans that their team will catch fire and win a championship. And every team is undefeated.

College basketball fans are in full throat at this time of year also. It begins with the conference tournaments, where teams who may have struggled all season can get hot for a weekend and land a spot in The Big Dance. Each year it happens enough around the country that hope abounds that it will happen again. Then, as March hits its hopeful stride, The NCAA basketball tourney, March Madness itself, begins. Sixty-eight (68) teams all have the hope of winning a national title, even the Cinderellas who feel fortunate just to be invited to the dance. The office bracket pools are filled out by folks from hoops experts to the person whom never watched a game all season. Even they are hopeful to somehow pick the team or teams that fulfill their hopes and dreams and become the last team standing. NBA fans get a chance to dabble in the hope arena a bit during this time of year also, as the postseason field of 16 teams begins to take shape. Again, fans in March can still hope that their team can "put it all together", and make a title run.

Football fans, both college and pro, have the hope of a new spring, as moves are made in

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preparation for fall heroics. College teams are in the midst of spring practice in March. At this time, roster spots are competed for, new players are working out for the first time, positive energy and comments fill the atmosphere. Fans of many teams feel that "this will be the year" during spring. And again, every college football team is undefeated in March. Professional teams are in a period of free agent moves during March. Each team has the chance to acquire that player or those players that will hopefully get them over the top, to the elite level, even to a title. Players who were battered at the conclusion of the past season, now run or jog with an extra spring in their step. Hope abounds in the spring.

The game of golf, which conjures warm weather images by its very nature, brings about the feelings of hope in its fanbase during this time of year. There have been tournaments as we get deep into March. But the four major tournaments await up ahead, beginning in April with The Masters. In March, every golfer is in play to win a major this year. Not to stop there, some fans can envision their favorite golfer winning multiple majors as spring approaches.

Why not? The sports world has so many joys of riding the ebbs and flows of the teams and individuals we root for during each season. It is a beautiful thing to stand at the front end of a season and see all the possibilities of greatness that lie before us. Right up there with the Thrill of Victory, has to be the Euphoria of Opportunity, when it comes to the sporting life. The possibility of the victory, of the goal to be accomplished, is ultimately what drives the athletes and fans alike. Beautiful weather, a clean slate, and springtime hope go hand in hand. And if it doesn't go in our favor this year? The hope of spring comes again next year. It's a beautiful thing.