

Talking points

The imperfect game: Baseball's life lessons

"Unless he figures out how to plug the oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico, Jim Joyce has likely written the first paragraph of his obituary," said Brian Dickerson in the *Detroit Free Press*.

Joyce, a veteran major league baseball umpire, last week mistakenly called a runner safe on a close play at first base on what should have been the final out, thereby costing Detroit Tigers hurler Armando Galarraga a perfect game. Over 135 seasons and tens of thousands of major league games, only 20 times has a pitcher retired 27 straight batters without a walk, a hit, or an error. Joyce's blown call denying Galarraga that 27th out, therefore, caused a national uproar. To his credit, Joyce freely admitted after viewing the videotape that he should have called the runner out, and sought out the 28-year-old Galarraga to apologize. Clearly shaken, Joyce told reporters, "I just cost the kid a perfect game. It was the most important call of my life." Galarraga hugged Joyce and told him to forget it. "Everybody's human," he said.

By providing such a vivid demonstration of human fallibility, said Ken Davidoff in *Newsday*, Joyce may have just changed baseball history.



After years of resistance, baseball last year instituted instant-replay review of controversial home runs, to make sure umpires saw them correctly. But why not go further, and review controversial safe/out calls on the bases and fair/foul calls on line drives? It's time for baseball to join the 21st century, said Josh Levin in *Slate.com*. Today, fans watching slow-motion replays in HD "can umpire better than the actual umpires, who are unfairly handicapped by having to rule in real time with their own eyes."

But that's not the point, said Bill Plaschke in the *Los Angeles Times*. True baseball fans love the game for its old-fashioned idiosyncrasies; what makes the game "so vulnerable is also what makes it so cool." Yes, we'd have remembered that game if Galarraga got that 27th consecutive out, but we'll remember it more because he didn't. We'll remember it most of all, said Peggy Noonan in *The Wall Street Journal*, because of how Joyce took full, heartfelt responsibility for his mistake, and for how Galarraga graciously accepted his apology. "All the principals in the story comported themselves as fully formed adults, with patience, grace, and dignity." In the most important way of all, it *was* a perfect game.