

ANOTHER A.I. FOR SIXERS, ANDRE IGUODALA: DRAFT, PAGES 162-156

DAILY NEWS SPORTS

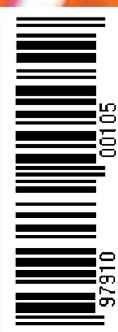


YONG KIM/Daily News

NUTS OVER BALLS

OUR FANATIC OBSESSION WITH FOUL BALLS

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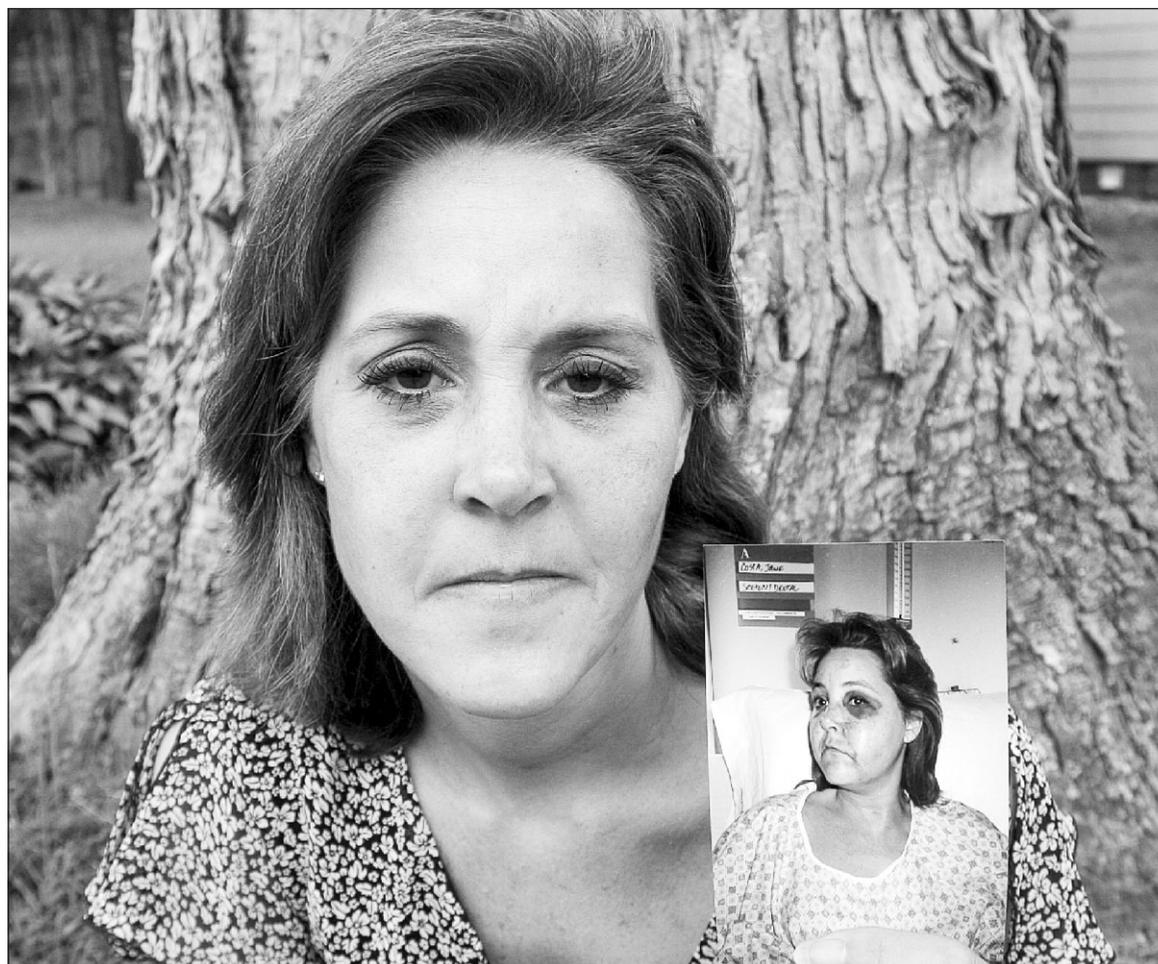


By **MARK KRAM**
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BOSTON — In her hand is a photograph of how she looked immediately afterward in the hospital. Whenever Jane Costa sees it, it sickens her, the way her young face is so swollen, so horribly discolored. Her nose, her jaw (in three places), and both eye sockets and cheekbones were shattered. Eight plates were placed in her face during 10 hours of surgery. The pain was so unspeakable that she just sobbed for hours on end. She appears in the photo as if she has been the victim of an automobile crash or perhaps some street violence, but you would be wrong if you guessed either. Costa ended up this way from going to a baseball game.

It happened at Fenway Park in Boston on Sept. 11, 1998. The Red Sox were playing the Tigers. Costa had not been to a game there since she was 8 years old, but it just so happened that her sister Debbie called her that day and asked, "I just got four tickets to the Red Sox game tonight. Do you want to go?" Sure, Jane told her; it sounded cool. So they drove up from Stoughton, Mass., got there in an hour or so, had trouble parking, and then walked to Fenway. Costa did not get to her seat in Section 15, Row DD, until the top of the fifth inning. She was behind first base, a mere 141 feet from home plate. "I remember thinking, 'Oh my God, look how close we are; you can see Mo Vaughn.'" She had been seated for no more than 5 minutes when Boston's Darren Lewis stepped to the plate. The count was 1-2. Costa heard the crack of the bat but never saw the ball whipping toward her.

Suddenly, Costa fell into a swirling pool of blackness. Voices filled the air around her. Her sister screamed, "Oh my God!" Someone said urgently, "Let me get in there. I am a nurse." Costa remembers her, or perhaps someone else, trying to remove her hand from her face, but Costa moaned over and over again, "No. No. Leave me alone!" The game stopped; the players looked up at her in the stands. When Costa finally opened her eyes, she looked down and saw she was covered with blood, from her overalls down to her shoes. She began to cry. Someone from the Red Sox staff asked her if she could walk



Robert E. Klein/for the Daily News

Jane Costa holds a photo of herself, which she says was taken after she was hit by a baseball.

MOVING TARGETS

Sometimes the fans get the foul ball, and occasionally it gets them

out on her own, at which point she was escorted to a first-aid room and then into an ambulance. "I was like, 'What the heck just happened?'" says Costa, seated in the living room at the home of her attorney, James R. Burke. "I thought someone had hit me in the head with their elbow."

It was not until she was in the rear of the ambulance, her head

spinning in pain, that she remembered something: "Oh no, that boy!" When she had gotten to her seat, she noticed a small boy in the row behind her. He was sitting on his dad's lap, bouncing up and down, no older than 5 or 6. "He was in the seat directly behind me," says Costa, who was later told by a Northeastern professor that the foul ball traveled be-

tween home plate and her skull in 1.07 seconds. She shudders when she thinks what would have happened to that boy if she had not been in her seat, if she had been held up in traffic longer or could not have found a parking space or had stopped at one of the concession stands on the way in. Or what if she had just told Debbie, "No, you go ahead and enjoy the

game. I have other plans."

Costa, 40, looks down at the photograph and says, "That boy would be dead. Because there is no way, never, ever, a boy that small would have survived that hit the way I did. Never."

Bartman's gaffe

Foul balls have been getting a lot of attention lately. Costa was in the news just a few weeks ago when a Massachusetts state appeals court tossed out her lawsuit against the Red Sox, stating that someone with even scant knowledge of baseball should realize that "a central feature of the game is that batters will forcefully hit balls that may go astray from their intended direction." At a Texas Rangers-St. Louis Cardinals game in Arlington, Texas, a few days later, a burly adult basically stole a foul ball from a 4-year-old boy, prompting Rangers announcer Tom Grieve to call the man "the biggest jerk in the stadium." And it was just last October when America became aware of the 26-year-old Chicagoan, Steve Bartman, who, during a pivotal playoff game between the Cubs and the Florida Marlins, deflected a foul ball from leftfielder Moises Alou, at which point the Marlins caught a second wind and once again acquainted the Cubbies with ignominy.

What these disparate events add up to is simply this: When a baseball flies out of play and into the outstretched hands of the fans, just about anything can happen (and usually does). For a young boy or girl who happens to catch a foul ball, it can produce a memory that can endure for years, long after the ball itself is gone; some of these accompany this story. But it can also lead to some very unpleasant situations, of fans endangering themselves and others by diving recklessly for the ball; some have even fallen out of the upper deck of stadiums in an effort to snare one. And there is the sad case of Jane Costa, a woman who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time; the foul ball that zoomed into her life changed it forever. Costa just shakes her head and says, "What I really would like to know is: 'Why me?'"

The question is an interesting one: Why *her* indeed? Some peo-

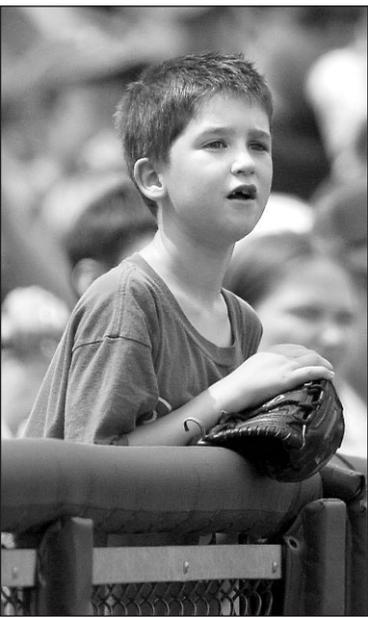
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NUTS OVER BALLS

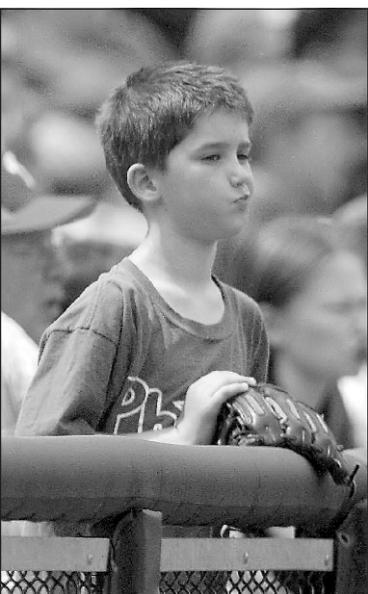


Photos: DAVID MAIALETTI/Daily News

Fans battle for ball at Citizens Bank Park on June 17.



Christopher McGrath waits for a foul ball (top) and then gets disgusted during Phils game.



FOUL BALLS

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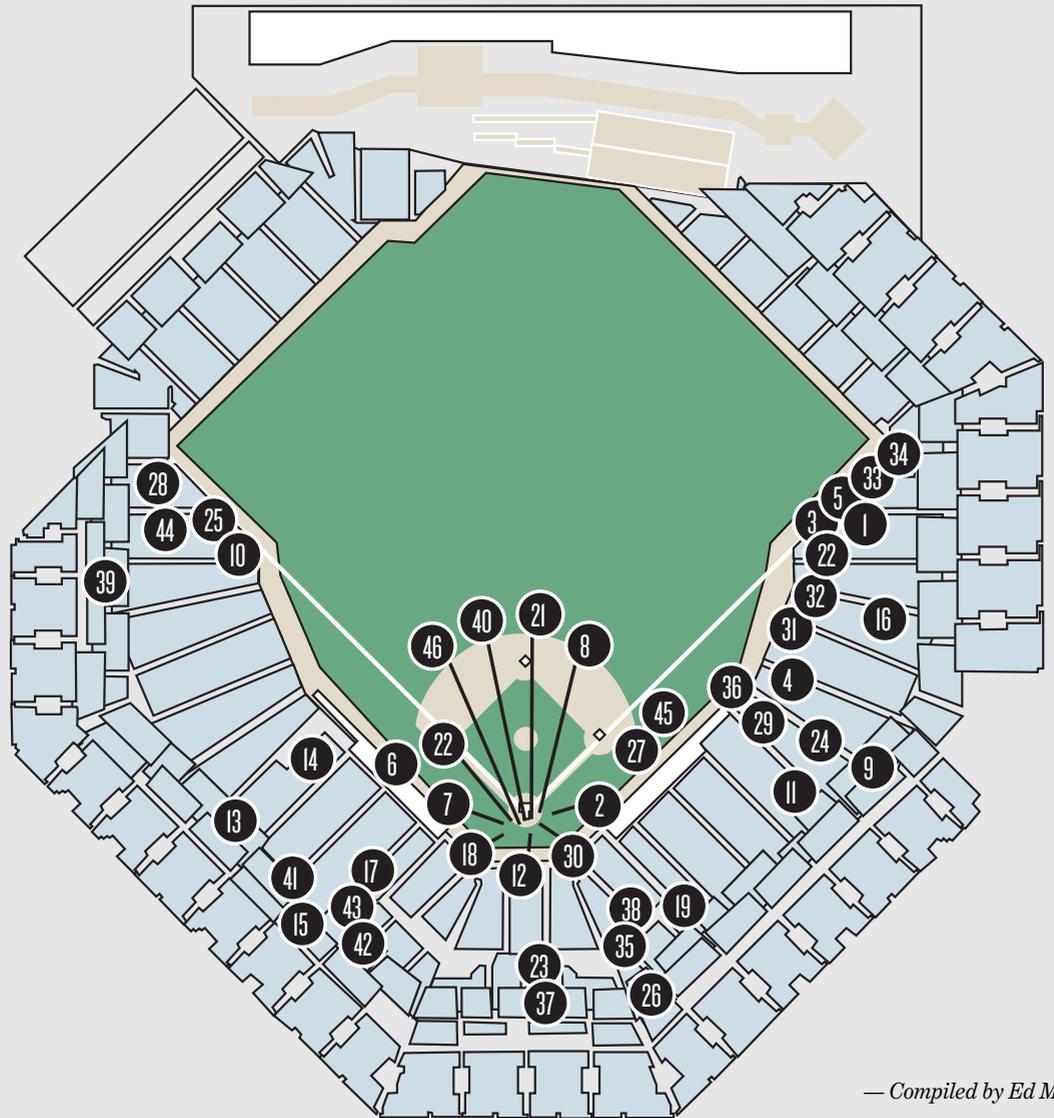
ple go to dozens of baseball games a season, and do so for years and years, and never come remotely close to getting near a foul ball. And yet here is Costa, who had not been to Fenway Park in 25 years and who just sat down at her seat when, *wham!* What is the probability of *that* happening? Quite simply, no larger than if you purchased a lottery ticket once in your life and it just happened to come in. University of Pennsylvania mathematics professor Dennis DeTurck refers us to “The Law of Large Numbers.”

“What that says is this: In a big enough population, everything will happen, so long as it is physically possible,” says DeTurck. “[In the case of Costa], I view it as akin to someone stepping off a curb and being hit by a bus. It hardly ever happens, but when it does it becomes news. There are a lot of people and a lot of buses. The same goes for baseball: There are a lot of people in the stadium, and there are a lot of foul balls. Sooner or later, you are going to get an event that is out of the ordinary. If someone sits down and immediately catches a foul ball or — in this case — gets hit with one in the face, the laws of probability say it is bound to happen.”

DeTurck then adds, “Though not necessarily to you. This is where people get confused. Just because something is bound to happen, that is not to say it is bound to happen to you. Somebody is going to win the lottery

EYES TO THE SKY

So where’s the best place to catch a foul ball? Well, we charted the fouls in a recent game between the Phillies and the Mets to find out. The balls gathered around home plate either were fouled back into the netting and rolled back on to the field, or trickled toward the dugouts.



—Compiled by Ed Morrone

BRAD J. GUIGAR/Daily News

this evening, but it is probably not going to be you.”

John Allen Paulos, a Temple University professor of mathematics, also subscribes to the lottery analogy. “This is just like someone who has purchased just one lottery ticket and wins,” says Paulos, the author of the best seller, “Innumeracy.” “Some people buy 10 tickets every day and never win. The people who buy 10 tickets every day have a better chance of winning, but any given ticket has the same likelihood of being the winning ticket, just as any given seat on any given day can be the one that ends up getting the foul ball.”

Paulos remembers he caught a foul ball as a boy at County Stadium in Milwaukee. “Johnny Logan hit it,” he says. “I was sitting on the third-base side, and I had my

glove with me. I used it to play catch with my father, and I somehow got it signed by Logan, who was later elected county sheriff.”

So does he still have the ball?

Paulos chuckles and says, “My mother thought it was just another old ball and threw it out.”

Say you actually set out to get a foul ball. Going to every game only gets you a chance of getting one; you have to play to win. A variety of other factors then come into play, chief among them being where one sits. DeTurck says that if you charted foul balls over a span of some years, you could probably identify a section of the stadium where foul balls end up landing. He says that by sitting there, you would then be able to narrow the odds of catching one “significantly” — from “one in a thousands to one in hundreds.”

The problem is that there are always other factors that also come into play. Paulos explains: “Such as how agile one is, does one have a glove, and whether one is nasty and takes balls away from someone else.”

DeTurck agrees it can get crazy. He remembers a ball that came near him at Connie Mack Stadium. “We were sitting in the upper deck and the ball came back toward us,” he says. “And this guy jumped up to catch it and landed on the backs of the people in front of him. People just seem to get caught up in the moment. Like when they fire these T-shirts into the crowd at hockey and basketball games. People go crazy over these things.”

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THE FAIREST OF THEM ALL

An assortment of foul-ball stories have emerged through the years. Here are just a few.

Oct. 10, 1924

Giants catcher Hank Gowdy trips over his own mask and misses a pop foul in the seventh game of the World Series vs. the Senators. The batter eventually gets on base and scores the winning run.



Aug. 17, 1957

Richie Ashburn fouls off a ball that breaks the nose of Alice Roth, then hits her again as she's being put on a stretcher. She is the wife of the Philadelphia Bulletin's sports editor, Earl Roth.

May 27, 1981

Umpire Larry McCoy accuses Mariners third baseman Lenny Randle of dropping to his knees and blowing at a ball to make it go foul. Randle claims he was yelling at it.

June 25, 1985

After a bat boy is hit by a line-drive foul, the Yankees enact a rule that forces the team's bat boys to wear protective helmets during all games.

Sept. 11, 1998

A foul ball off the bat of Boston's Darren Lewis strike Jane Costa in the face, shattering a number of bones in her face. She sues, but the judge sides with the Red Sox.

June 13, 2001

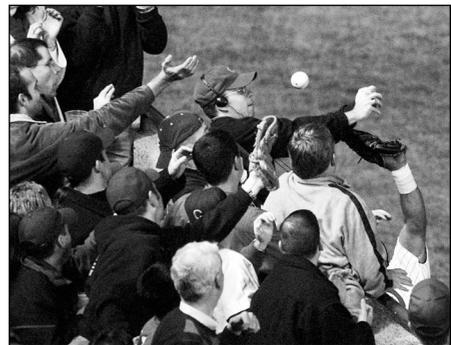
Players notify stadium security when a fan, reaching for a foul pop, drops and then retrieves a gun on the field. Turns out it's a Glock pistol belonging to an off-duty Detroit policeman.

May 28, 2003

The Milwaukee Brewers unveil a \$36 ticket that guarantees the fan will leave the ballpark with either a foul ball or a ball used during the game.

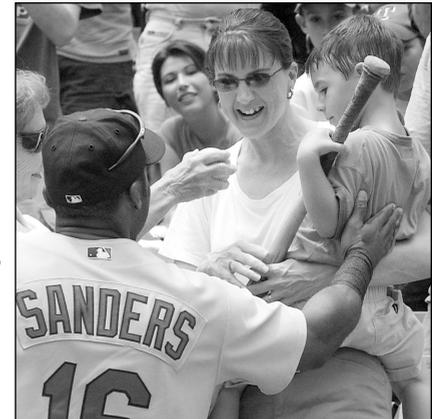
Oct. 14, 2003

Steve Bartman sticks out his hands and deflects a foul ball away from Cubs outfielder Moises Alou. Florida rallies to win the game and then wins the series, preventing Chicago from advancing to the World Series.



June 13, 2004

The Cardinals' Reggie Sanders gives his bat to 4-year-old Nicholas O'Brien, who had been run over by an adult fan while trying to catch a foul ball.



— Paul Vigna

1920s 1930s

1950s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

SOURCE: nationalpastime.com and wire services

BRAD J. GUIGAR/Daily News

FOUL BALLS

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Some history is in order here: In the early days of baseball, you could not keep a ball that flew into the stands. You had to give it back. The Cubs and the Reds once played a game in 1913 using just one ball. The 1921 Spalding Baseball Guide stated: "All balls batted or thrown out off the grounds or into the stands shall, when returned to the field, be given into the custody of the umpire immediately." That changed one day at the Polo Grounds when a fan, Ruben Berman, chose to keep his foul ball instead of handing it over to an usher. Berman was forcibly removed from the stadium, for conduct that the Giants characterized as "disorderly" and "ungentlemanly." Berman sued. The Supreme Court of New York County ruled in 1921 that he was entitled to keep the ball, but did not award him the \$20,000 he asked for to cover his "humiliation before a large crowd." From

that point on, the foul ball has become a small treasure. And many leave in the hands of spectators.

Though it costs just a few dollars and is generally of small worth even in the collectables market, the foul ball is pursued as if it were studded with diamonds. No obstacle stands in the way of some fans from getting one, be it as a young child holding a hot dog or a row full of off-duty cops. One fan at old Memorial Stadium in Baltimore in 1985 was so intent on snagging a foul pop hit by Kansas City's Frank White that he fell out of the upper deck, saving himself from certain injury, if not death, by grabbing onto the railing behind him; photos of him dangling in the air were published in newspaper across America. The fan, William Joyner, later told the *Washington Post* that he could not believe "I almost killed myself over something that costs, what, maybe two or three dollars." Then-Oriole broadcaster Jon Miller said of Joyner as he climbed back to his seat: "It looks like something out of Indiana Jones."

Fans have been so conditioned to scramble for foul balls that they simply lose their heads. Apparently, this is what happened in the case of Matt Starr, the 28-year-old landscaper and former youth minister who wiped out 4-year-old Nick O'Brien as he dove for a foul ball at the Rangers-Cardinals game. Rick DuBose, the senior pastor of the Sachse Assembly of God Church, told the *Dallas Morning News* that Starr is "not the bad guy" he has been characterized as, just that "he probably got a little aggressive and did something he regrets." Starr was loudly booed by his fellow fans, who began chanting in unison: "Give him the ball!" Television cameraman zeroed in on him as he sat there, not budging, ball in hand. While Nick stood there in a somewhat dazed state, his mom, Edie O'Brien, wheeled around and told Starr: "You trampled a 4-year-old to get this ball." O'Brien said that Starr replied, "Oh well." It was not until the story became national news that Starr relented and offered the

boy both an apology and the ball.

No one can say how common it is for fans to be physically injured by foul balls; the clubs themselves are guarded with that information, if indeed some of them even have it. In preparation of his lawsuit on behalf of Costa, attorney Burke learned that from 1993 to 1998 (excluding 1996, which the Red Sox did not have), 234 fans suffered injuries to foul balls. "So that give you some idea [how frequently it occurs]," he says. While only one fan has died due to injuries received from a foul ball — 14-year-old Alan Fish was struck in the head at Dodger Stadium in May 1970 by a line drive off the bat of Manny Mota — it is not uncommon for fans to get hurt by foul balls. A 37-year-old woman was hit in the left eye at old Tiger Stadium in 1999 and eventually lost it; the Tigers gave her \$5,000, the maximum their insurance policy would allow.

Legal action is always a long shot in these circumstances. Costa says she went through the yellow pages in the telephone book

and called every attorney there; none would take her case. Costa was then referred to Burke, who sized up the case as follows: "Horrendous injuries, difficult to win." But he believed that in a profound way Costa had been the victim of an injustice, and believed also that the "law needs to be changed." Baseball is protected by the fine print that appears on the back of every ticket, which essentially says that the organization is not liable for any injuries that occur to spectators from any errant objects that land in the seats. Burke argues that this warning, written in what he calls "mice print," is wholly insufficient, and that there were not enough signs at Fenway Park to alert fans to the potential dangers of foul balls. One of the judges asked Burke during arguments if this was not just a case of "open and obvious danger."

"Here in Massachusetts we have the famous fish chowder

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NUTS OVER BALLS

A Phillies fan celebrates after grabbing a foul ball during a win over the Royals.



G.W. MILLER III/Daily News

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case, where there is a bone in the chowder and it is reasonably foreseeable that you will find it," says Burke. "I said, 'This is far different, judge. In that case, the person has ordered the fish chowder, has control over the soup and spoon, and control over what he places in his mouth. Jane Costa had no such control when she entered Fenway Park.' The judge simply said, 'No.'"

The hurt lingers

Nothing has been the same for Jane Costa since that evening at Fenway Park. She says not a day passes when she is not in pain to some degree; her gums constantly ache and her face swells up whenever she bends over in a certain way, her eyes webbed with black and blue circles.

She is always weary and irritable. Worse, she says she is not just the same person she used to be, that her sister Debbie recently told her: "Jane, that gleam you used to have in your eye is gone."

But it was not just what happened that evening that angers Costa, who sued the team to re-

cover close to \$500,000 in medical bills and lost wages as a physical therapist.

A big part of it is how cold she says the Red Sox were to her. When she did not hear from Darren Lewis, the batter who hit the ball, she wrote him a letter upbraiding him for being so unfeeling; Lewis is no longer playing. Nor does she believe the Red Sox organization looked upon her with any compassion. Costa says, "No one even sent a card or asked, 'How are you Jane? Do you need anything?' Something. Something."

While a Red Sox attorney did not reply to a telephone inquiry seeking comment on this story, Burke says, "They may not have had a legal obligation to Jane, but they certainly had a moral obligation to her."

Burke says he is heartened by the recommendation of the state Appeals court, which said that baseball should consider starting a fund to help fans injured by foul balls. Costa would like to see the Red Sox install netting to protect spectators seated in the lower stands.

She shrugs.

"The only thing that keeps me

THE ODDS ARE . . .

What are your chances of nabbing a foul ball at a major league game? Higher than the odds of being audited and lower than the possibility of being hit by lightning. These numbers, and many more, can be found in a book entitled "Life: The Odds," by Gregory Baer, scheduled for release in October. Some of those odds include:

Being audited	175 to 1
Marrying a millionaire	215 to 1
Catching a foul ball	563 to 1
Being dealt a royal flush	649,739 to 1
Drowning in your bathtub	685,000 to 1
Landing a dream date if you're an average American Joe	880,000 to 1
Being hit by lightning	2.32 million to 1
Suffering a shark attack	6 million to 1
Becoming president	10 million to 1

going is that there is a reason for everything," she says. "Maybe the reason I was there was to get in between the ball and that little

boy. I believe that."

By the way, in case you were wondering: She ended up with the ball. ★

FOUL TERRITORY

I'm 21 years old, sitting in the lower 200 level down the first-base line. Tim Wallach . . . hits a high foul pop, and I know off the bat it's coming right at me. My girlfriend ducks, but I stand up as the ball comes heading down. The old guy in front of me with the fishing hat reaches up to make the catch. I stick my hand out, accidentally knocking off the hat, and snatch the ball from him, right before it lands in his glove. Greatest feeling in my life up to that point. However, for the entire game I had to hear about how the old guy had been going to games since the Vet opened . . . and this young punk "stole" the ball from him. Oh well, I still have it in its case sitting on my bookshelf in my basement.

Joe Ciccone
East Norriton, Pa.

My grandfather tried for years to catch a foul ball for my dad, and twice had balls glance off his fingertips [including one off the bat of Willie Mays]. He never did get one, though. Then, at my first game, in the bottom of the first, I caught a foul off the bat of Juan Samuel. After the initial shock was over, I looked over and my dad and grandmother were both crying. I didn't realize until years later how special that really was.

Kevin Maguire
Philadelphia

About the sixth inning, the people in front of us left, so I moved down. In the eighth inning . . . Bobby Abreu hit a foul off John Franco that headed in my direction. The ball glanced off my hand and landed in a second-row seat, a few seats down from where I was. I went over to retrieve it when a woman reached for it also. I pushed the seat back and the ball fell down, where I picked it up. The story told by my "friends" is that I beat some poor old woman up and nearly broke her arm. That's not how it happened, but that's OK. I'll live with the story, I got my ball.

Mike Lacy
Brick, N.J.

I don't remember who hit the foul ball, but I do remember it was very high and curled onto the roof that hung over that part of the stadium. We followed the path of the ball, hoping to have a chance to catch it if it landed in the stands. Once we saw it go on the roof, our attention immediately returned to the action on the field. It seemed like a long time, but in fact was probably only a matter of seconds when the ball came speeding down from the roof and landed directly between us, bouncing many sections away to another very surprised fan. It wasn't a question of us getting a foul ball, it was one of a foul ball almost getting us.

Dave Ross
Atlantic City