

OPINION editor: **Ray Criscoe**

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## Baseball vs. football

This is a time of year when baseball and football compete for the fans' attention. This weekend, 30 major league baseball

teams with about 1,110 players are trying to figure out which two will play in the World Series beginning Oct. 21.

In just the fifth week of their 16-week season, 32 professional football

teams with about 2,112 players are playing to determine who will meet in the Super Bowl in Miami on Feb. 4.

I'd like to see a survey in which Americans were asked to say whether they are more interested in baseball or football — the World Series or the Super Bowl. I would then like to have all the football fans and all the baseball fans take IQ tests. I'm certain the football fans' cumulative score would be far higher than that of the baseball fans.

I am so much more a football fan than a baseball fan that I'm not even sure which baseball teams are most likely to be in the World Series this year. I always assume it will be the New York Yankees, but not this year.

I don't want to alienate all the baseball fans who read this column, but football is a better game than baseball. Whoever worked out the idea that a football team got four tries to

advance the ball 10 yards was a genius. It creates drama on every series of downs. If a team doesn't make the 10 yards, they have to kick the ball and that produces a few minutes of dramatic excitement when a player from the opposite team tries to run the ball back up the field.

Watching baseball makes me sleepy. I see the pitcher standing on the mound in front of the batter and it takes him forever to throw the ball at the batter. He adjusts his sleeves, tugs on his cap, spits, kicks a hole in the pitcher's mound with his spikes, then throws the ball to first base in an attempt to catch the runner off base. I have never been watching a baseball game when the pitcher was successful in getting a runner out by catching him off base.

The catcher makes some signals in his crotch with his fingers that are meant to tell the pitcher where to throw the ball. Why, I always ask myself, is the catcher supposed to know better than the pitcher where to throw it? Are pitchers dumber than catchers?

The outfielders in a baseball game — left, right and center — frequently play a whole game without touching a ball.

At least half the time, the pitcher doesn't throw the ball anywhere near where the catcher asks him to throw it. Controlling the flight of a baseball precisely is difficult. Very often the pitcher throws the ball into the dirt, into the batter, over the catcher's head or so close to the batter's head that the batter has to drop into the dirt to avoid getting beamed.

The shape of football is the work of genius. It is made of four pigskin panels, each one of which ends in a point. When they are fitted over a rubber balloon and the balloon is inflated, the football becomes a perfect fit for the hand of a player and perfectly designed to sail evenly through the air in the direction it is thrown. It can be kicked almost as accurately as it can be thrown when the ball is dropped by the kicker in such a manner as to have the inverse shape of the arch meet the oblate shape of the football.

Am I the only one who doesn't like or understand the glory of the game of baseball?

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**Andy Rooney's** column, syndicated by Tribune Media Services, appears on Tuesdays. Email him at <a.rooney@yahoo.com>.

### COLUMN



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