



PLEASE READ WHOLE TRANSCRIPT TO VERIFY CONTENT

MARCH 28, 1998

WEEKEND SATURDAY

Futility Index

SCOTT SIMON, HOST: Baseball season starts next Tuesday -- 29 major league teams plus the Chicago Cubs. Hey, I can say that. I'm a Cub fan. The Cubs have not won a World Series in 90 years.

Now over this century, the world has launched men and women through the sky and among the stars, invented polio vaccines and frozen orange juice, unlocked the atom, cloned mammals, but the Cubs still lose.

Their futility can now be quantified. Rick Climan, a mergers and acquisition partner with the law firm of Cooley Godward (ph) of San Francisco, has devised an index that certifies what amounts to the suffering quotient of sports teams and their fans.

Mr. Climan joins us from Palo Alto. Thanks for being with us.

RICK CLIMAN, CO-CREATOR, FUTILITY INDEX: Hi, Scott.

SIMON: How do you quantify futility?

CLIMAN: It turns on a couple of factors, actually. First and foremost, it turns on how long it's been since a professional sports team has won the ultimate championship in its sport. But another important factor is looking at how many teams are competing for the ultimate championship.

And I guess the good news in it for Cubs fans like yourself is that while the Cubs may have gone for an awfully long time without winning a World Series, they were competing against a fair number of teams over that period.

By contrast, in other sports, like the National Hockey League for example, where there have been only six teams for a good chunk of time, not winning a Stanley Cup over a period of times represents a much more futile accomplishment.

And the lesson from all that is that a team like the New York Rangers, who endured, albeit a shorter losing streak from 1940-1993, without winning a Stanley Cup, have a much higher futility index rating.

SIMON: Of course, on the other hand somebody who saw the Rangers win the Stanley Cup in 1940 might actually stand a statistical chance of being alive.

LAUGHTER

And it occurs to me, not only was -- was I of course not alive when the Cubs last won the World Series, my father wasn't alive when the Cubs won a World Series.

CLIMAN: No. It -- it is one of the more remarkable current streaks in sports. But I guess part of the point of quantifying this is to give Cubs fans, who've suffered as much anguish as anyone, at least some comfort in knowing that statistically speaking, their franchise is not the most futile of all time.

SIMON: It -- it's, I must say, hard for a fan of the Cubs and the Sox to be publicly complaining so much as long as the Bulls are around.

LAUGHTER

CLIMAN: Well, that's right. When you have Michael Jordan in your town, it makes up for an awful lot doesn't it?

SIMON: Mr. Climan, I don't quibble with your statistics, but I just do want to tell you this: things are going to be different this year on the West Side.

LAUGHTER

CLIMAN: I think I've heard that before.

SIMON: Ninety years if I'm not mistaken.

CLIMAN: At least 90 times, that's right.

SIMON: Mr. Climan, thanks for speaking with us.

CLIMAN: It's my pleasure.

SIMON: Rick Climan, who together with his friend Eric Reifschneider (ph), has created the Futility Index. This is a rush transcript. This copy may not

be in its final form and may be updated.

Dateline: Scott Simon, Washington, DC

Guest: Rick Climan