



Dating during the playoffs?
By Margot Carmichael Lester



You and your date get along great, but now it's time for the baseball playoffs and — obviously! — you need to catch every game. Will your fanaticism force her to send you to the showers? Or can you figure out some way to stay in the game? And what if you are the not-quite-so-rabid fan in this situation—can you get closer to your sweetie rather than fading away as he watches the seventh-inning stretch? Well, whichever side of the fence you're on, these tips will help you keep your dating life going during the playoffs... and might just help you hit a home run with your honey.

Advice for the fellas

In most (but not all) cases, it's the guy who's gung-ho for the game... and the woman who's not so interested. Here, how to level the love playing field:

Use travel days. Maybe Wednesday isn't usually a big date night, but if it's an off day for the series, you could win lots of brownie points. "I'm a rabid Red Sox fan," admits Tony Caputo of Bellevue, WA. "But I've never dated one. So to make up for missing 'date nights' because of a game, I plan dinner at the best restaurant in town or something she really likes that I don't. It's a way of showing her that I do still care—and that I appreciate her understanding about my sports addiction. It seems to work."

Help her learn the game. "Nothing's worse than watching the game with your girlfriend and having her ask stupid questions," says Cardinals fan Paul Garrison of St. Louis, MO. "I teach her a little about the game. You know, the difference between strikes and balls. What the catcher's signals are about. Small stuff. It'll help both of you enjoy the game more."

Buy her a little present. Everyone likes a gift... why not have it be baseball-related? "There are fun things like lingerie for women in baseball logo lines now," says Paula Duffy, founder of Incidental Contact, a sports learning site for women. That will get her in the mood for... a lot of things.

Plan a romantic movie night. Make some hot dogs, get some good beer, and rent some movies that give her the right idea about baseball, suggests Kevin Magon of San Luis Obispo, CA. "Watch the movie *Fever Pitch* with Drew Barrymore and Jimmy Fallon." Or *Bull Durham*. These movies have great baseball action and a touch of romance to keep both of you interested.

Advice for the ladies

If you're the less interested party who feels that the playoffs are putting a damper on your romance, here are some tips:

Watch your mouth. "Make comments about the players' attractiveness sparingly," advises lifelong Dodgers fan Charles Small of Washington, D.C. "You have to realize that you are kind of in a frat-boy environment where the last thing on a guy's mind is whether Derek Jeter is cute or not. And root against your boyfriend's team if and *only* if you are OK with being heckled and if you are actually a real fan of the team."

Know the score. "The one stat that is critical to know is how many games out of playoff contention is your guy's team as you move into playoff season," Duffy says. "Why? Because it's all about winning, and to win the World Series you have to be in the playoffs."

Figure out the keys to the game. Search any of the network or sports Web sites for the latest information and analysis. "Learn the roster of your sweetie's favorite team and share some obscure fact, which will amuse and even impress the guy," suggests Jeff Louderback, founder and editor of Sox and Pinstripes (www.soxandpinstripes.com), a blog/Web site dedicated to the Red Sox and Yankees rivalry. "If my girlfriend told me something like, 'I really think that Jason Varitek is the catalyst for the Sox's success because his leadership and ability to call a game outweigh his batting average,' I would be impressed and turned on!"

Get in uniform. Show your care by sporting some team apparel. "A hat is good as long as it isn't a pastel color," Duffy counsels. "A tee shirt, tank top or something else particularly feminine will get you the hard stares, especially at a game or a sports bar. He might stop sipping his beer for a moment... who knows?"

These tips will help both of you build your romantic momentum during the playoffs and, with any luck, the World Series!

Margot Carmichael Lester is a North Carolina-based writer and author. She writes often for both www.msn.com and www.monster.com.