



BY JOE FAVORITO

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ON N.J. SPORTS MARKETING

If you are a baseball fan of a certain age, you may not have known his name but you certainly knew his voice. Also if you happened to be lucky enough to attend a Brooklyn Cyclones game in Coney Island for any part of the past 11 years, you also knew Warner Fusselle's voice but probably never saw his face.

Fuselle was the sometime PA announcer and always radio voice of the Cyclones (and before that the radio voice of some of the greatest Seton Hall basketball teams ever) but he was best known to baseball fans around the country as the man behind the "TWIB" notes, and after the passing of the legendary Mel Allen, as the voice of "This Week in Baseball." While today that might not seem like a big deal, in the 1970's and 1980's TWIB was where you went for weekly highlights of action from around the AL and NL, a great half hour that usually led into the one national broadcast game each Saturday afternoon. It was produced magnificently by MLB Productions, with Fuselle's smooth tones rolling over highlights of Ozzie Smith doing backflips or Dale Murphy homering into an Atlanta bullpen.

A longtime New Jersey resident, Warner's voice led you around the league. More importantly Fuselle, like the others we have lost, were part of a gentle summer tradition for those in the industry. They would always have a story, a tip or an idea during a day or night at the ballpark or the arena, rarely asking for anything in between. True gentleman of the game. No yelling, no silly comments out of line designed to embarrass, just a genteel manner and a willingness to pass along whatever traditions and information had been passed on to them.

Were they a bit quirky? Yes, thank God. We should all be so quirky. They all loved their jobs and had an ability to make you feel important, whether you were 18 or 60. In some conversations I had with him over the years, Fuselle would express frustration that he hadn't gotten "x or y" broadcast job after TWIB went away, but he always seemed to enjoy the beautiful ballpark in Coney, hard by the Atlantic Ocean, not far from either Nathan's or the Abe Stark skating rink. Eventhough he was a Wake Forest grad raised in the south, he had become a Brooklyn baseball guy, not unlike another gentleman of the South, Red Barber had become for legions of Brooklyn Dodgers fans of a bygone era.

Yes Fuselle and the others were a throwback to a certain era, but more importantly they were really a reminder of what should be important in a business that is all about games.

Most recently I had chatted with Mark Fratto, forever an innovator at St. John's University and now the Red Storm Director of Communications. He had pulled Warner in to do play-by-play for St. John's baseball in a test program, where SJU created broadcast quality video over the Internet for a fraction of the price. The experiment worked, and Fuselle ended up calling games on the CBS College Network this spring, even though Fratto joked he had to remind Warner to watch the action on the monitor and not keep telling the stories that he was so gifted at.

The New York-Penn League will begin in a few days, and there will be a void in the Cyclones press box, one that was occupied since the team's inception by a student of the game, always with a story to tell. No doubt the team, and hopefully all of baseball, will pause sometime this week to remember Warner Fuselle. Then we will get on with the ballgame, just as he would have liked.

A man, like many, who loved the game dearly, and who we can all learn from going forward.

Joe Favorito has over 24 years of strategic communications/marketing, business development and public relations expertise in sports, entertainment, brand building, media training, television, athletic administration and business. Visit him at JoeFavorito.com.

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