

2012 Election of Baseball

-Ian Kingsbury

All knowledgeable baseball fans knew heading into this season that the Phillies and the Red Sox would be playing in the World Series. With the additions of Carl Crawford and Adrian Gonzalez the Sox looked to have a well-balanced offensive attack with a formidable rotation to boot. The Phillies have what some were quick to proclaim the greatest rotation of all time.

But that's why the game is played. Clay Buchholz got injured, Crawford struggled, and John Lackey altogether imploded as the Red Sox went on to have a September that was a painful reminder of the days of the Curse. The Phillies were at least able to make the playoffs, but their season ended with embarrassment topped off by Ryan Howard's exploded Achilles tendon on Friday night.

When Rick Perry announced he was running for president two months ago, political 'pundits' were quick to declare the GOP contest as a two-way race between Rick Perry and Mitt Romney. But like baseball, politics isn't played on paper. It's played in small towns in Iowa, colleges in New Hampshire, cookouts in South Carolina, and debates across the nation. In these arenas, Rick Perry has faltered and the "experts" appear presumptuous in suggesting that the pursuit of the GOP nomination had become a two-way race.

Perry has been a gaffe machine since he entered the race. He labeled Social Security a Ponzi scheme and then looked Dan Quale-esque in questioning Romney's track record, asking, "Is it the Mitt Romney that was on the side of against the Second Amendment before he was for the Second Amendment? Was it — was before he was before the social programs, from the standpoint of he was for standing up for Roe v. Wade before he was against Roe v. Wade?" Most recently, news surfaced that he leased a ranch with a heinously derogative name.

Presidential hopefuls can recover from such gaffes. Joe Biden emphatically encouraged a paraplegic Missouri state senator to "stand up." While running for reelection in 1984, Ronald Reagan joked to radio technicians before an NPR interview "My fellow Americans, I'm pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes." Word of the joke got out, and the Soviet Union briefly went on high alert.

What Rick Perry cannot recover from is the Tea Party's awakening to his 'compassionate conservative' approach to illegal immigration, which includes controversial measures such as granting in-state tuition to illegal immigrants in Texas.

Stricter immigration policy is an important issue for many who identify with the Tea Party Movement. In the 2010 midterm elections, the Tea Party-backed J.D Hayworth challenged John McCain in the primary largely because Tea Party oriented voters rejected McCain's "amnesty" for illegal immigrants. According to a poll conducted by the University of Washington, 88% of Tea Party supporters were in favor of the strict immigration bill that was signed into law in Arizona.

This all spells trouble for Perry. A recent Florida straw poll that was widely expected to be won by Rick Perry was instead a shocking and decisive victory for Herman Cain and one that many correctly

assert was a referendum on Rick Perry's stance toward illegal immigration. Given that the Tea Party has a number of candidates to choose from whom more closely reflect their values (particularly Michelle Bachmann and Herman Cain), it seems that the short-lived marriage between Tea Party voters and Rick Perry is over.

While it seems very likely that Mitt Romney will remain the favorite among establishment Republicans (especially now that Christie has decided against running), it remains to be seen which candidate, if any, Tea Party voters will conalesce around. For the past two months, the press has spoken of a two-way race between Mitt Romney. But like the baseball experts who predicted a Red Sox and Phillies matchup in the World Series, political pundits have forgotten Yogi Berra's ageless maxim- "it ain't over till its over."

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