Hello,

Please enjoy my columns. I am interesting in keeping track of which communities they go to. I would appreciate it if you could take a moment and send me a quick email at rejeangiguere@rejeangiguere.com when you publish the first one.

Thanks, Rejean.

Pat Venditte: A Major League Pitcher with Two Weapons

Being a pitcher in the big leagues requires an arm of gold. Pitchers must have the ability to control the spin, velocity, and direction of the baseball all in an attempt to hit the floating batter’s zone, or flirt with it, hopefully inducing a missed swing.

Some pitchers throw harder and blow the ball past the batter while others can make the ball move, dip, and slide, which brings on confusion. The combination of both is the best-case arsenal of a well-rounded pitcher.

Then there is Pat Venditte, who plays for the Oakland Athletics.

Pat is the only pitcher in the major leagues who is ambidextrous; he can pitch equally well with both hands. When he was a kid his father encourage him to build up this ability to establish a competitive advantage. He also had Pat kick footballs with both feet to teach him the correct leg motion required for pitching from both sides. There was even a minor league rule put in place called the “Pat Venditte Rule” to set limits around how many times he could change arms against any one batter.

In a game where managers might pull a left-handed pitcher to put in a right-hander to face a specific batter and then loose the original pitcher for the rest of the game, this skill Pat Venditte has must be invaluable. He can stay in the game and just pitch from the other side. He can pitch right-handed against a batter and then switch to left-handed the next time he sees the same batter. This will make it extremely hard for the batters to get a fix on his throwing pace, or action on the ball.

Strangely, originally Pat had two different deliveries for each arm. The right came over the top and pitched curves, sliders and an eighty-five mile an hour fastball. The left arm had more of a side-arm delivery, producing sliders and fastballs. After shoulder surgery on the right arm, he converted to a sidearm throw for both arms.

On a side note it seems strange that Pat is only two armed in baseball, he can’t eat left handed or golf, write or do any other tasks left handed either.

When millions of kids aspire to be a major league player and lack the skills or genetics to get there, when a golden arm can mean long term security for yourself and future family, it must be amazing to have two such arms. It must be an interesting negotiation process at contract time. No other player to compare against, and a skill that is unmatched.

Good on Pat and the effort he has put in or the foresight of his father to try something different. Either way, one thing I am sure, we will see another two armed pitcher in the future. It can only be a matter of time before someone else is capitalizing on this concept

And this opens up some interesting thoughts.

When will we see the hockey player with a straight blade, playing left and right handed? Or when will there be tennis players playing from both sides, and the quarterback throwing with either hand?

Rejean Giguere is a Northern Ontario author of six novels whose passion spills over into the sports world. Check out his website at www.rejeangiguere.com.

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For further information or media enquiries contact

Rejean Giguere

Box 562

Terrace Bay, ON P0T 2W0

rejeangiguere@rejeangiguere.com