

Women talk about their love for baseball

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The dog days of summer are prime time for baseball fans. And there are plenty of women who are right in the mix, following every pitch, every swing, every inning, every out.

"I love this time of year. I talk about sports for a living, but baseball is my first love," says sports columnist and Jersey City native Paula Duffy.

Duffy also holds seminars especially for women to teach them the basics of sports and produced the audio guide, "A Woman's Guide to Baseball: How to Talk his Language!" (\$9.98, Gilda Media Corp.).

"I'm an old-school girl," says Duffy, who grew up as a fan of the New York Yankees and still listens to games by satellite radio now that she lives in California. "To me, there's just nothing better than going to a ballpark. It's beautiful, and it's green. You go to the ballpark and relax and take it all in — the whole scene, the history, the strategy of the game. It's just a great way to spend an afternoon."

Lisa Carone and Rebecca Ramos wholeheartedly agree. Like Duffy, their fathers introduced them to the game when they were little kids. Now Carone and Ramos work for the Lakewood BlueClaws, the minor league affiliate team of the Philadelphia Phillies that calls Lakewood home.

"I've been a baseball fan my entire life. It really is America's pastime. You just grow up with it," says Carone, the BlueClaws' special events manager. "There's just so many aspects of baseball, starting with the game itself. It's an awesome game to watch, to play, to follow."

Adds Ramos, who works in the BlueClaws' box office manager, "Some people think it's boring, but I find it exciting. You can have nothing going on in a game for seven innings and then all of a sudden you have six or seven hits, and the game changes just like that."

Like many fans, male and female, women baseball fans have fond childhood memories of watching games with their families or friends.

Michelle Jenner of Manchester recalls going on a class trip every year to see the New York Mets play at Shea Stadium.

"Every year in middle school we went to see the Mets. That was the best. You got a day out of school to go to a baseball game," Jenner says. "I like the Yankees now; my husband likes the Mets. But it's just a fun game, even watching it on TV. And one of the things I like the best is the fact that it's an actual game that takes as long as it takes. It's continuous. They don't stop, they just play the game."

Melissa Garduno Young is such a baseball nut that she introduced her daughter to her first game when she was less than a year old, though that trip wasn't exactly planned.

"The baby sitter bailed on me at the last minute, so we just took the baby with us to Yankee Stadium, stroller and the diaper bag and everything," Young says. "It wasn't ideal, but we did it. I wasn't going to miss the game."

The family aspect of baseball is a big appeal for women, Carone says.

"We see a lot of families come here and a lot of moms, and it's not like the women are just sitting there. Women are very into sports, and they're watching the games, too," she says. "We have mothers who will call and say how much they love coming here with their son or their daughter. It's a real family-oriented atmosphere."

Of course knowing something about the game helps.

Duffy, who also is a lawyer, says she started her women and sports seminars three years ago at the suggestion of a friend who hung out with Duffy one night at a sports bar during a game. Duffy's research found that lots of women wanted a way to learn about sports.

"There were a lot of women who said, 'We're intimidated. We don't know what to look for. We feel like we're ridiculed if we ask a question, and the men in our lives won't teach us' Duffy says."

Duffy says the seminars and subsequent audio guides have proved very popular, especially her basketball guide. She sees it as part of a wave of "womencentric" sports sites like FemmesFan.com where Duffy answers questions from fans.

Some hardcore sports junkies may be chagrined by some of Duffy's advice such as how to use sports knowledge to meet guys. But Duffy is unapologetic.

"My business is about bringing more women into the game, and I don't care how I get them there. I just want them to go," Duffy says. "Women in their 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s want to know more. I don't begrudge some who see it as more of a social thing. Just go see a game."

STORYCHAT 

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