

THE  
TALK


FOR MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2009



RICK MORRISSEY

Carlos Zambrano  
could never walk  
away from baseball.

SPORTS



JON HILKEVITCH

GPS technology  
could save airlines  
tons of fuel.

CHICAGOLAND



AMY DICKINSON

This serviceman is  
preparing for battle—  
not marriage.

ASK AMY, LIVE!

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<b>ILLINOIS</b>		<b>MICHIGAN</b>	Midday	Evening
June 7 Pick 3	243	June 7 Daily 3	383	240
June 7 Pick 4	3083	June 7 Daily 4	9754	3706
June 7 Little Lotto	02 11 14 15 35	June 7 Fantasy 5	02 10 16 17 27	
June 6 Lotto	13 18 20 25 26 49	June 7 Keno	02 03 05 08 14 15	
June 8 Lotto jackpot	\$6 million		17 20 29 34 37 43	
June 9 Mega Millions	\$25 million		44 48 53 54 55 59	
			63 69 77 78	
<b>INDIANA</b>		<b>WISCONSIN</b>		
June 7 Daily 3	663	June 7 Pick 3	339 & 588	
June 7 Daily 4	0736	June 7 Pick 4	2253	
June 7 Lucky 5	05 13 31 32 33	June 7 Badger 5	03 13 16 21 30	
June 6 Lotto	03 05 17 33 41 43	June 7 SuperCash!	01 04 07 08 15 19	
<b>POWERBALL</b>		June 6 Megabucks	03 04 07 15 19 34	
June 6	10 18 23 30 45 02			
June 10 Powerball jackpot	\$45 million			

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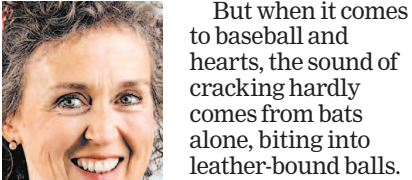
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TRIBUNE VOICES

# Bad day at diamond leaves Little Leaguer in the rough

The night before, we laid out the uniform. The white pants, the socks and shirt, and the hat the color of a rubber ducky.

The mitt, nearly sacramental, was placed on top. The final offering, it seemed, to the patron saints of baseball, the ones whose job it was, you'd think, to look down on little diamonds dotted all across America, and make sure no hearts were broken. Not need-



Barbara Mahany

lessly, anyway.

But when it comes to baseball and hearts, the sound of cracking hardly comes from bats alone, biting into leather-bound balls.

That's pretty much the way it went the other Sunday, when the team known as the Plumbers took the field. It was the

opening game of the season, in the league the little kids look up to, the first one where you get to don the catcher's garb, and kids, not coaches, pitch.

What happened was, like so much of life, lopsided. One team was made up of little squirts, 2nd graders new at baseball and pitching and hitting without a tee, and the other team was, well, old hands. And huge, by the way—3rd graders who'd been around the bases plenty of times. Before the teams took to the grass and mounds, even a mope like me could tell that somehow something was off-base.

Right off, the other team's two coaches gunned for steals and extra bases. Relentlessly. Racing runner after runner 'round to third, then home. A kid would hit, and the Plumbers would fumble for the ball, chase it half a mile. All the while, the coaches spun their arms around like some cockeyed windmill, fanning in another run.

Didn't take long for the little ones to assume a dazed sort of expression.

Ten runs scored against them in the first inning.

Then the little guys got a turn. Three



CAROLYN KASTER/AP PHOTO

up, three down.

Pretty soon the score was 20 to nothing.

An inning later, we lost count. But the kids on the other team would bel-low out the score from time to time, a pathetic count that rose—on one side only—like mercury on a steamy August day.

"It's 35 to zero," one kid called out. I couldn't help myself. It was time to politely make a point.

"How about some humility," I mentioned to no one in particular. I got poked in the ribs by the fellow sitting next to me. He told me to cool it. And I guess, because he's the man I married, he was trying to keep me safe.

The worst part, though, came hours later. My Plumber couldn't fall asleep.

"We lost by 43," he said. "That's almost half a hundred," he added.

Just the night before, it had been all the home runs in his head that kept this would-be catcher-slash-center-fielder awake. He heard the crowd roaring. Imagined the coach handing him the mini-plunger that, each outing, goes to the Plumber-of-the-game.

And now, one game later, he'd seen the way it could be: Coaches taking on the task as if a win, at any cost, was all that mattered. Or maybe it was just a cold hard fact of the ball field that is life: You'll get creamed sometimes, no

matter how hard you try, and the ones who cream you won't look back. Just kick up clouds of sand, sliding into home. He was mad and sad and thoroughly confused: Baseball was a game he loved. A game he watched at night, lying beside his father. A game he read about every morning, slurping statistics along with Frosted Flakes.

And now, because of baseball, he felt, he said, like someone put their baseball cleat where his heart goes thump, and then, with all their might, clomped on it.

He wasn't giving up, mind you. Just poring over pages in the play book, trying to figure out the game.

And so am I.

Is this the raging stream into which I've tossed my child? Should I leap and pull him to the shore? Or do I sit and pray and trust he'll find his stroke, and be all the stronger for the lessons learned where the current slows for no one?

For now, all I know is this: When I walked in that night, to kiss him one last time, his cheek was wet. He'd cried himself to sleep.

*A version of this essay originally appeared on Mahany's Web site, [pullupa.chair.org](http://pullupa.chair.org).*

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## Drug-busters' finds make for good reading

While interesting nuggets of information can be found in well-known government publications like the Statistical Abstract of the United States and the Congressional Record, few periodicals that Uncle Sam puts out are as consistently fascinating as the Drug Enforcement Administration's Microgram Bulletin.

The monthly newsletter, which is available online, highlights unusual drug seizures nationwide, alerting law enforcement and lab specialists of the novel ways traffickers are hiding or manufacturing their illegal wares.

In the past four issues, such seizures have included churros stuffed with

plastic-wrapped packages of cocaine; grape-flavored meth; a teddy bear clutching a pink heart and stuffed with marijuana; and a reclining angel statue filled with cocaine.

Among the many trivia from the newsletter is the apparent fascination Ecstasy peddlers across the country have with cartoon characters. Pills with the image of Bart Simpson, Garfield and Transformers—both Autobots and Decepticons—have all been submitted to labs.

Cocaine has been found inside a ukulele, engine pistons and even wicker baskets (the latter uncovered at the Houston airport). Last year, the

Chicago lab encountered football-sized fake rocks filled with cocaine. Heroin has been found inside plastic capsules that looked like kidney beans, inside a flat-screen TV that powered on but didn't show a picture and even inside functioning perfume spray bottles.

"It's anything that's out of the ordinary," said DEA spokesman Michael Sanders. "In the earlier Micrograms we used to see cocaine ... pressed into hollowed-out two-by-fours."

"We're just letting people in law enforcement know the different means people are using."

—Steve Schmadeke



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