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RIT president: Time for Sox is now



Scott Pitoniak
Democrat and Chronicle columnist

(October 23, 2004) — He wore a Boston Red Sox jersey over his dress shirt and tie. He also wore a smile radiant enough to illuminate Fenway Park.

It was Thursday, the day after his beloved BoSox had completed the greatest postseason comeback in baseball history against those Damn Yankees, and Albert Simone couldn't stop beaming.

The president of Rochester Institute of Technology grew up in Boston and fell in love with New England's favorite team back in the day when Ted Williams was swinging splendidly and Bobby Doerr was vacuuming up every ball hit his way at second base.

Like so many citizens of Red Sox Nation, Simone had endured numerous baseball indignities through the years, numerous agonies of defeat.

He remembered Johnny Pesky holding onto that relay too long and Bucky F. Dent popping one over the Green Monster and Bill Buckner allowing that grounder to trickle through his legs and Aaron Boone's walk-off homer at Yankee Stadium.

But unlike his fellow sufferers, Simone never believed in the Curse of the Bambino. Schooled in mathematics and statistical probability, he felt it was only a matter of



WILL YURMAN STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
RIT president Albert Simone doesn't believe in The Curse —he thinks the Red Sox will win the World Series because they're a good team and odds favor a team who hasn't won it all since 1918.
[Day in Photos]

Sports Columnist Bob Matthews: Red Sox edge Cardinals in seven

Boston bound

About 20 months ago, Mark Feiock was given an interesting choice by his employer, Mario's Via Abruzzi on Monroe Avenue.



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time before something would finally go right for the Red Sox.

"You might flip a coin 10 times or 20 times or 30 times and come up with tails every time," he said from his seventh-floor office overlooking RIT's sprawling campus. "But if you flip that coin enough times, eventually it's going to come up heads and eventually things are going to even out."

And, so, he never lost faith.

"Sure, I was disappointed after we didn't do it in previous years, but I'd get over it," he said. "After it was done, I would say to myself, 'We'll get 'em next year.'"

Perhaps, after an 86-year World Series championship drought, "next year" will be "this year."

"I think we're going to do it," said Simone, when asked about the Red Sox-St. Louis Cardinals World Series best-of-seven match-up, which begins tonight at Fenway. "I know the St. Looie club is very good, but I just think we finally have a Red Sox team that is built to win it all. We've always had good-hitting teams, but now we have speed and defense to go along with the hitting. I don't think the Red Sox have ever had a team like this."

He is right. In years past, the BoSox resembled a slow-pitch softball team. They could pound the ball, but they often had problems catching it and throwing it. And forget about bunting and stealing and hit-and-run plays and manufacturing runs. It was pretty much home run or bust. All or nothing.

But that has changed during the brief reign of whiz-kid general manager Theo Epstein. Different, too, is the character of this team. That was evident in the way the Red Sox stormed back to win four straight against New York in the American League Championship Series. This, after dropping the first three, including a 19-8 thumping — numbers that eerily called to mind 1918, the last year Boston won it all.

Even Simone's devotion was tested at that point.

"When they were down three games to none

Feiock, a lifelong Boston Red Sox fan, was offered a minimal wage increase or a trip to the World Series in Boston if the Red Sox made it in 2003 or 2004.

He didn't take the raise, but after overcoming a 3-0 deficit against the hated New York Yankees this week Feiock's decision has paid off.

"You've always gotta believe," said Feiock, a 35-year-old executive sous chef who has been to about 12 games this year.

Feiock and Mario's owner/general manager Anthony Daniele will leave from Mario's for Boston on Sunday morning to watch Game 2 at Fenway Park.

"Mark lives for the Red Sox and I'm always looking for a way to keep the staff's enthusiasm up," Daniele said.

It worked.

"I don't have any fingernails left," Feiock, a Henrietta resident said, "but I'm psyched."

Today

St. Louis (Williams 11-8) at Boston (Wakefield 12-10), 8 p.m.

Sunday

St. Louis (Marquis 15-7) at Boston (Schilling 21-6), 8:10 p.m.

Tuesday

Boston (Martinez 16-9) at St. Louis, 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday

Boston (Lowe 14-12) at St. Louis, 8:25 p.m.

I didn't think they were going to do it, but I thought there was still a glimmer of hope," he said. "I felt the Yankees were vulnerable at that point because they needed just one more win and they had always found a way to get it done before against the Sox, so they had to be cocky and overconfident. And I felt we had a team as good as, if not better, than theirs, so if the Sox pride kicked in, we might just make things interesting."

Curt Schilling's gritty pitching performance on a bloody, torn right ankle in Game 6 proved to be the pivotal moment.

"They had to sew his skin to the tissue so he could pitch," Simone marveled. "That had to hurt like hell."

The greatest pain, though, was experienced by Yankee hitters, who did plenty of swinging and missing vs. Schilling.

"That was one of the gutsiest performances you are ever going to see in sports," Simone said. "He was terrific."

Though he'd love to see the Sox win it all, Simone said the feat might produce a letdown.

"This is going to sound blasphemous, but a World Series title would take away from the anticipation of next season," he said. "Once you experience that feeling for the first time, it's never going to be the same. That's just human nature."

Still, it's a risk he's more than willing to take.

"I've never subscribed to Murphy's Law regarding the Red Sox — that if something can go wrong with them, it will," he said. "I don't believe in curses."

Instead, he subscribes to Simone's Theory. It says that eventually things even out, eventually the wait ends, eventually the coin comes up heads.

Roughly 58 years since watching his Red Sox lose the World Series to the St. Louis Cardinals, things have come full circle for Simone. He believes "next year" will become "this year" for the team that has been the pride and the bane of New Englanders for too many Octobers to remember.

Thursday

Boston at St. Louis, 8:25 p.m., if necessary

Saturday, Oct. 30

St. Louis at Boston, 7:55 p.m., if necessary

Sunday, Oct. 31

St. Louis at Boston, 7:55 p.m. EST, if necessary



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