

Do you remember when “The Bird” was the word?

Since the beginning of this baseball season a number of people in and around the game passed away. Since I am a Tiger fan, the one that hit closer to home was the death of Mark Fidrych. Unfortunately, I never got to see him pitch at the stadium, but he was frequently on TV and his antics were played on the sports highlights of the News. Monday night baseball was a big thing on TV in 1976. There weren't the number of cable stations. Believe it or not televised games were usually only shown on Saturday. Anyone else remember the 'Game of the Week'?

Mark Fidrych brought a bit of the kid in all of us to the ball park. From filling in holes on the mound with his hands, to talking to the baseball or himself, and then shaking the hands of almost everyone when he won the game or left the game. He was a kid having fun on the ball field. He won 19 games in his rookie year, was voted rookie of the year, won 9 games before being named an all-star. And as quick as it started, the magic ended. An injury the next year made his season start late, and after winning 6 games his arm just gave out. Without the injuries who knows what his career would have been.

I remember watching those Monday and Saturday games. I remember some of the news stories and articles in the paper. It was the summer just before my Senior year. Even though the Tigers were a sub-500 team that year, they captured the nation for every game that Mark Fidrych pitched. I don't recall anything else in baseball that came close to that year, and a performance by a 20 year old pitcher known as “The Bird”.

[MLB network talks about the Bird](#)
[Last batter in Monday Night game](#)
[Mark 'The Bird' Fidrych interview](#)