

**Matt James** print story email story

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Of bombs, underwear and 50 years of Wiffle Ball

By MATT JAMES Tribune columnist

Random thoughts and acts of silliness:

---WIFFLE NEWS: Did you know Wiffle Ball has its own official rules?

Those rules don't even include base running, or, if you can believe it, wrapping the ball in duct tape so you can more efficiently whip it at your friends' heads. Had no clue.

This comes to our attention because 2003 is the 50th anniversary of that great American sport, loved by great little American kids, with great big welts all over their bodies.

A grandpa named David N. Mullany invented the original Wiffle Ball in 1953 in Fairfield, Conn., because his son and grandson had peppered most of the neighborhood with golf balls, and tennis balls, and pretty much anything else they could throw and smack with a bat.

To celebrate the anniversary, the company is creating the Wiffle Ball Hall of Fame. You can nominate anyone you want at www.candystand.com until Sept 1. The person should be someone who captures the spirit of the game, so I have decided to nominate Mike Scott, the La Crosse man who built a Wiffle stadium in the lot next to his yard and holds games for his neighbors.

The hall of fame inductees will be announced in October.

The best part of Wiffle ball is that even though it has official rules (as we now know), you can pretty much play any way you want. The Scotts play with the "Lena Rule," meaning if the dog — that would be Lena — can grab the ball before you get to first base, then you are out.

Like most ballplayers, Lena has games when she loafs and others where she makes almost every play, so you can see that at some ballparks there is still meaning to the term "spitball."

When I lived in Selma, Ala., a couple years ago, and a dozen guys would get together each Sunday to play Wiffle Ball. Our rules:

No. 1: Wrap the ball and bat in duct tape until they are both dangerous weapons and you can hit the ball a city block;

No. 2: Taunt other players as often as possible;

No. 3: When a runner leaves a base, throw the ball so hard that it makes a water-slapping sound when it smacks flesh, and he screams like a schoolgirl and falls to the ground in agony, like a wounded extra from "Saving Private Ryan";

No. 4: Then, taunt him.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

---HOLIDAYS: Keep an eye out for those little-known national holidays. If you weren't paying attention, **Aug. 13 was National Underwear Day** and Friday was National Slacker Day.

An Internet company called Freshpair.com started Underwear Day this year, and promoted it by sending models around New York in only their unmentionables. The company also distributed many useful facts like this one: It would take 83,880 men's briefs to build a stack as high as the Washington Monument. That should come in handy.

Also, and I have trouble believing this one, 73 percent of men have tried on women's underwear. If this is true, we in the other 27 percent would like to taunt you.

As for Slacker Day, I'd have mentioned it earlier, but, well, you get the picture.

---BOMB: A round of applause to those who made sure the box that arrived in a truck to the South Side on Friday was a hoax. Strange how writing "bomb" on a box can cause such a disturbance.

But local officers and firefighters did a nice job of making sure everyone stayed safe. They certainly took it seriously, bringing in a bomb-sniffing dog and the bomb squad.

In the words of one officer, "They don't pay me enough to rip the top off that thing."

Nice work, men and women. Luckily, not everyone spent the day slacking.

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