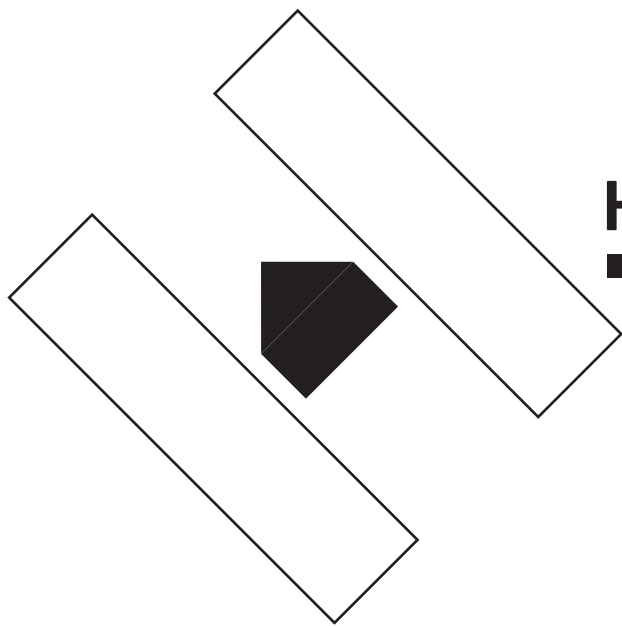


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Humanities Iowa "Going to Cooperstown"

A documentary film funded in part by Humanities Iowa is headed to baseball's Hall of Fame.

In "The New Ball Game," a passionate fan (Iowa City filmmaker Steve Holmes) explores the impact of a team on the life and personality of several North American towns. Along the way, he meets a giant taco, a pig that takes baseballs to home plate and a base-running toilet. The program includes locations in Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Davenport and Waterloo.

The film has begun playing on PBS stations around the nation and will get monthly exposure this season at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. "A Celebration of the Minor Leagues," presented by Baseball America, takes place the first Friday of every month in Cooperstown. Museum visitors who present a minor league ticket stub receive free admission, a free copy of the latest Baseball America publication and a chance to see the film.

This bittersweet story looks at a threat to a slice of small-town Americana that's fast going the way of soda fountains and drive-in movies. It includes comments from Hall of Famer Paul Molitor, former star Dave Stewart and announcer Bob Uecker.

"The New Ball Game," a co-production of Iowa Public Television and Steve Holmes Productions of Iowa City, Iowa, won a CINE Golden Eagle, one of the most prestigious awards in broadcasting and video ("The Simpsons," The Discovery Channel and Ken Burns's "Jazz" also picked up awards in this contest).



The show has also been profiled on Major-League Baseball's website, mlb.com. Details on "The New Ball Game" are at <http://www.shpvideo.com>.

"Baseball is a political, social and economic topic in many communities," says Holmes. "Increasingly, voters and politicians are being asked to decide the worth of sports to a city. But how much do we know at a big-picture level about what it means to have a team? What does it contribute to the economy, our image and our sense of community?"

For Holmes, the project is a labor of love. Each year, he attends at least 35 minor-league or semipro games (never enough). At a public TV station in Kansas City, he produced sports features and short documentaries, including a dozen on major- and minor-league baseball teams.

Scenes from the show: At a slow point in one game, bullpen pitchers play riddle games and set fires to ward off mosquitoes... A pitcher, whose career is threatened by injuries, lives with his wife in a fan's spare bedroom; to save money, the young couple clip grocery coupons and chow down on macaroni and cheese and canned chili... In a modest apartment, three young hopefuls watch superstar Mark McGwire's historic 61st home run.

While the Hall of Fame is best known for its major-league exhibits, Jeff Idelson, vice president of communications and education, says, "Cooperstown and the Hall of Fame have always been a strong destination for minor league baseball fans across the nation. The Museum chronicles the vast history of baseball on all levels, and has had a strong relationship with the minor leagues since Opening Day in Cooperstown, when William Bramham, president of the National Association, helped cut the ribbon on June 12, 1939 to officially open the Hall of Fame."

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) provided the largest single investment (\$65,000) to "The New Ball Game." Unique in American public television, ITVS was established by Congress to fund and promote programming that involves creative risks and addresses the needs of underserved audiences while granting artistic control to independent producers. Programs and series funded by ITVS are made available free of charge to all public television stations nationwide.

Funding also came from the Iowa Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities and other NEH state partners: Humanities Texas, the Illinois Humanities Council and the Wisconsin Humanities Council.

For more information contact Steve Holmes, Executive Producer of "The New Ball Game" and "RailFAN," at (319) 337-9507 or sigerson@shpvideo.com.

