

## “What is a Baseball Fan?”

The word fan is an abbreviation of fanatic, meaning “insane.” In the case of baseball fans, the term is appropriate. They behave insanely, they are insane about trivia, and they are insanely loyal.

For starters, baseball fans behave insanely. Every day, they wear their official team t-shirt and warm-up jackets to the mall, the supermarket, the classroom, and if they can get away with it, to work. Then, whenever the team offers a giveaway item, the fans rush to the ball park to get the roll-up hat or tote bag that is being offered that day. When baseball fans attend a game, they put on the team colors, pin on their team buttons, proudly display their hand-held signs that read “Go Dodgers” or “Braves are #1,” and form a rooting section echoing every cheer flashed upon the scoreboard. Fortunately, this insane behavior only lasts between April and October.

In addition to behaving insanely, baseball fans are insanely fascinated by trivia. Every day, they turn to the sports page and study last night’s statistics. They simply have to see who has extended his hitting streak and how many strikeouts the winning pitcher recorded. Even their bookshelves are crammed with record books, team yearbooks, and baseball almanacs. They delight in remembering such significant facts as who was the last left-handed third baseman to hit into an inning-ending double play in the fifth game of the play-offs. If you do not show equal interest or enthusiasm in baseball trivia, they look at you as if they doubt your sanity.

Last of all, baseball fans are insanely loyal to the team of their choice. Should the home team lose eight in a row, their fans may begin to call them “bums.” They may even suggest, vocally, that the slumping cleanup hitter be sent to the minors or the manager fired, but these reactions only hide their broken hearts. They still check the sports pages and tune in to get the score. Furthermore, this intense loyalty makes fans dangerous. Anyone who dares to say to a loyal fan that some other team has sharper fielding or a better attitude could be risking permanent physical damage. Unlike other sports fans who only stick around when the getting is good, baseball fans remain loyal when the going gets tough.

From mid-October through March, baseball fans are like any other human beings. They pay their taxes, take out the garbage, and complain about the high cost of living or the latest home repair, but when April rolls around, fans are transformed, the record books come off the shelves, and the devotion returns. For the true baseball fan, another season of insanity has begun.