

WHEN SNODGRASS MUFFED THE FLY

It happened on Oct. 16, 1912, the eighth and deciding game of the World Series.

In the bottom of the 10th, with the New York Giants winning by a run and three outs away from a World Series victory, Boston Red Sox pinch hitter Clyde Engel sent a lazy pop fly to centerfield. Giants center fielder Fred Snodgrass, an average hitter and dependable fielder, settled under it and ultimately dropped it.

A lot of other things happened. Snodgrass made a spectacular catch on the next play. Giants Hall of Fame pitcher Christy Mathewson walked the next batter. Tris Speaker hit a pop foul that Mathewson, first baseman Fred Merkle and catcher Chief Meyers all failed to catch. Then, Speaker went on to single in the tying run, and, after an intentional walk, the Red Sox won the game with a sacrifice fly from Larry Gardner.

Nevertheless, Snodgrass' blunder was the scapegoat for the Giants' loss to the Red Sox. His failure to catch the ball became known as Snodgrass' Muff.



Even the story of his death was headlined: **Fred Snodgrass, 86, Dead; Ball Player Muffed 1912 Fly.** In a 1940 interview, Snodgrass spoke of how that fated fly ball would come up as he met or spoke with people. Snodgrass was immortalized in the Lawrence Ritter book *The Glory of Their Times*.

Isn't it interesting how one mistake can have such lasting implications, bringing infamy and the enormous challenge of trying to live it down? But doesn't Snodgrass also prove that we do not have to be defined by our failures?

Snodgrass, who retired from baseball in 1916, would go on to be successful in business as a banker, an appliance merchant and a rancher. He was elected mayor of Oxnard, California, and served on the City Council for three terms. There was much more to Fred Snodgrass than a single, unfortunate moment in time.

Fred Snodgrass, 86, Dead; Ball Player Muffed 1912 Fly

VENTURA, Calif., April 5 (UPI)—Fred Carlisle Snodgrass, who muffed an easy fly that helped to cost the New York Giants the 1912 World Series, died today at the age of 86.

For us, maybe our blunders are not played out with such renown and infamy, but they can still stay with us and dog our continued steps. Have you dropped the ball with something? Maybe you let down somebody you loved or somebody who was really counting on you. Perhaps you hurt someone special to you. It might have been a foolish or ungodly word or deed when someone was watching. The bigger the blunder, the heavier that burden of guilt might be in your heart.

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There's no excusing it. But what will you do now? Will you let it keep you down or will you refuse to be defined by it? Snodgrass wasn't about to let his blunder define him. And neither should you.

The writer of Hebrews urges us: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us* (Hebrews 12:1 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter