

Opening Day

July 24

I have been watching baseball for more than sixty years, and in all that time I do not remember ever looking at the baseball landscape and saying: "I've never seen *anything* like this." But last night, I did. The games were played in empty stadiums with piped in sound, cardboard fans in the seats, managers and umpires wearing masks, and TV announcers calling the action from remote locations around the country. None of us have ever seen anything like this. But strange as all this was, it wasn't the biggest story about these games.

Four years ago, Colin Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem to protest racial inequity in America, and he was publicly ostracized, attacked by the President and blackballed by the NFL. Last night, the pregame ceremony centered on a video montage of players pronouncing the need to speak up about ending racial inequity in America. In each park, players on both teams arrayed along the baselines knelt together before the game, holding a long continuous black ribbon to signify their unity on this issue. A modified MLB logo with BLM below the familiar silhouette was stenciled on the mound, and BLM adorned the side of each base.

In Los Angeles, several Giants players, joined by manager Gabe Kapler, knelt during a rousing gospel version of the anthem. On the Dodger side, all stood except for Mookie Betts, who knelt and bowed his head. Max Muncy and Cody Bellinger, flanking him on either side, each put a hand on one of Mookie's shoulders. Before he rose to his feet, Betts gave each a tap on the back of the calf to show his appreciation. Later, between innings Kapler talked during his dugout interview with the network broadcast crew not about hitting or pitching but about the need to fight systemic racism in America. None of us have ever seen anything like this.

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