



The game has changed

Here it is November and the 106th World Series has come and gone. Another baseball season will have passed until next spring when the process will begin anew. In my youth I only looked forward to next spring, but as I get older I find myself looking back as well. Literary activist, E. E. Miller, has written about that period in his life where he begins to take that long look back. He refers to it as, “The 5th Inning.”

The fifth inning

You see, a baseball game can be called and recorded as “official” once the 5th inning has been completed. According to Miller, and I agree, it is also a time in our lives that around age 50 or so, we begin to experience an anxiousness as we realize the majority of our life has been completed and time is running out. We begin to assess our strikes, base hits and our errors as we wonder if we’ll ever really make a “home run.”

During my career, I have interviewed a couple thousand people who have been at various stages in their own careers. In fact,

just yesterday I interviewed a newbie — a rookie, if you will. He was a great kid full of youthful enthusiasm with high hopes for the future. He just wants a chance to get into the game and play. He assured me he has the talent it takes but now he only needs the opportunity to get some experience.

I’ve also interviewed a number of veterans — those with 10 or 20 years of experience. They are in their prime. They’ve dug in and are doing what it takes to get ahead — to play in the big leagues with their name on the roster as a “starter.” Then there are the old-timer’s like myself — a guy who’s been the rookie, the “starter” and is now a manager and head coach.

Career paths take twists and turns

Whether you are a baseball player, an engineer, an accountant or a turnaround superintendent, it doesn’t matter — careers are careers. We all start out as rookies with aspirations of our personal version of what the “Hall of Fame” is for us. Then something happens; it’s called “life.” Yes, “life” steps in and suddenly we’re thrown a curve ball. It may be so severe it puts us out of the game

for a while.

As I once again look back, I recall the 1980s when “age discrimination” was the rage as companies downsized, right sized and thought the older team members should just get out of the way. (You’ll recall there was a national recession at that time, too.) Companies offered exit packages. This allowed them to make way for the rookies because they had youthful exuberance and weren’t stuck in a rut. But, of course the real reason was the rookies were less expensive. As we old-timer’s know, actions have consequences and there are often unintended consequences as well. What the corporations forgot was when the old-timers walked out the door, plant specific knowledge went with them. This created a new learning curve for the rookies and mistakes that had been made a decade or two earlier were bound to be repeated because “old pops” wasn’t there to say to the youngsters, “Yeah, we tried that in 1972 and here’s what happened.”

The new flex-force is on the march

So, once again, we are in a national, if

not a worldwide, recession. But the game of life has taken yet another turn. Today, there are many more people with a decade or more of knowledge, specialized skills and experience. There are fewer qualified rookies. And the seasoned professionals are becoming free agents. They’re flexing their muscle as a highly qualified flexible work force.

It all really boils down to this; just because it’s the 5th inning and we thought we had lost the opportunity to finish the game with the same team as we began our careers, we suddenly now find we can play for another team and still finish the 9th.

So, I say to all of you cutting edge baby boomers, don’t retire that jersey just yet. Clean up those cleats, suit up in another team’s colors and get out there and finish the game because as Yogi Berra once said, “It ain’t over ‘til it’s over.” You’ve got more bases to run and the opportunity to get inducted into your very own “Hall of Fame.”

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NEWS UPDATE

\$575 million awarded for CCS development

WASHINGTON — Twenty-two projects that will accelerate carbon capture and storage (CCS) research and development for industrial sources were recently chosen to receive \$575 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), to support the goal of cost-effective deployment of CCS within 10 years and help to position the United States as a leader in the global clean energy race.

The projects selected are from four different areas of CCS research and development: large scale testing of advanced gasification technologies, advanced turbomachinery to lower emissions from industrial sources, post-combustion carbon dioxide capture with increased efficiencies and decreased costs, and geological storage site characterization.

Large scale testing for advanced gasification technologies will receive \$312 million for three advanced projects. These projects will accelerate the technology development by conducting tests at larger prototype, engineering scales.

Four projects for the development of turbomachinery and engines will receive \$123 million. These projects will help improve CCS when applied to industrial processes and will integrate with carbon capture in industrial-based systems to optimize CCS.

Five projects will develop advanced technologies for carbon dioxide capture for industrial systems and also application to power plants. These projects will receive \$90 million and will advance state-of-the-art carbon dioxide capture technologies with increased efficiencies and decreased costs that can be applied as part of an integrated carbon capture and storage system.

Geologic storage site characterization will receive \$50 million. Ten projects previously selected under ARRA funding will be expanded to increase the scientific understanding and locations of geologic formations for safe and permanent carbon dioxide storage from industrial sources.

For more information, visit www.energy.gov or call (202) 586-5000. ●