Going, Going, Gone!: How the Home Run Has Changed Major League Baseball

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Abstract
What makes the home run so magical? Why is it the one play in baseball that has stood out above the rest for its ability to bring in fans? The answer lies in the drama and excitement that the home run brings to the game. The home run has constantly been baseball’s grace when faced with falling attendance. In three specific time periods, the 1920s, 1960s, and 1990s, the home run provided a spark that reignited the dying flames of interest among baseball fans across saving America.

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Where have all the home runs gone? (Chris Carlson/AP). Within the existential crisis confronting Major League Baseball over the way the modern game is played, there was always one saving grace. If the games were going to feature more pitches, more strikeouts, more walks, more pitching changes, and more all-or-nothing swings but fewer balls in play than at any time in the game's history — all of that could be tolerated, from a fan-experience perspective, as long as there were also tons of home runs. It doesn't mean this version of baseball was better than the old one, but it means, even for fans who might otherwise be turned off, it was tolerable. "I actually really like the game," Commissioner Rob Manfred said last year.