

# Cubs fans: Stop the whining

By JEFF CASPERSEN

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Cubs fans, quit it. I hope I'm not the only one sick of the lot's incessant whining over the fan interference fiasco involving 26-year-old Steve Bartman in Game 6 of the National League Championship Series.

Get over it. It's impossible to gauge whether or not Cubs left fielder Moises Alou would or would not have caught the Luis Castillo-struck fateful eighth-inning fly. A true championship-caliber team would not have let something it couldn't control completely unravel its cause.

Bartman didn't run out to the mound and surrender the ensuing eight Marlin runs. Bartman didn't inhabit Alex Gonzalez's vessel and fumble a routine grounder. The score was 3-0 prior to Bartman's intervention and it remained 3-0 directly after it. The Cubs took care of the rest. They were responsible for the subsequent implosion, not Bartman.

Mark Prior, all 23 years of him, and his Cubs teammates let a tragic twist of fate steal their composure. With Pierre on second and Castillo given second life, a rattled Prior issued a walk. Then Gonzalez bobbled Miguel Cabrera's undeniably routine groundball and the rest is history. The flood gates opened and the Wrigley Field crowd transformed into a sordid exhibition of humanity, hurling beer and vicious insults at Bartman, who did nothing more than leave the door ajar for a remarkably talented and remarkably young Marlins team.

The Cubs had every opportunity to jam that door shut, but failed, something the North Siders need to come to terms with. Dusty and the Cubs failed you, not Steve Bartman.

Why must people always seek excuses for letdowns? Why must they anoint a scapegoat to shoulder the crushing load of failure? Sure, it's easier to accept that way, but why terrorize some poor sap who did what most any of us would have done, reach for a fly ball headed our way. Just watch a replay. How many flailing outstretched arms do you see? Several!

Dusty and the Cubs unsuccessfully took on a perceived curse and an upstart Florida squad full of uppity youngsters, most of whom probably have only a limited grasp of the accomplishment's magnitude. The Marlins stole from a nation of Cubs fans a shot at a that ever-elusive World Series title and have yet to receive much credit for doing so.

The Fish took whatever opportunities came their way, gift-wrapped or not, and spun them into gold. This is a better-than-lucky Florida team. Just ask the Giants.

Contact Jeff Caspersen, Jr. at 468-3518 or by e-mail at [udjsports@pacific.net](mailto:udjsports@pacific.net).