

# UNL graduate goes yard with film debut

## 'The Cub Fan' takes look at beloved team's followers

By DAVID WILSON  
Staff writer

Bob Ray has found success through a team that seemingly can't find any.

A Chicago native and 1997 UNL broadcasting graduate, Ray took a gamble and attempted to jump-start his career by writing, producing, directing, shooting and editing a documentary on Cub fans.

Though Ray did receive one grant for his film, "The Cub Fan," the majority of the year-long project was funded out of his own pocket.

"In this business," Ray said, "no one is going to give you a hand out. You have to be self-motivated. The main reason I did it was to give myself experience."

"I figured, how cool would it be to interview all these die-hard fans and find out what makes them want to follow this team that hasn't won a World Series in almost a century."

And the experience Ray gained has already opened doors for him in the broadcasting field. The documentary's television debut came last April on WTTW in Chicago.

"The Cub Fan," narrated by Bob Costas, will air on Nebraska Public Television for the first time Saturday morning.

"All the way through, in my head, I already knew it was going to be on PBS and I knew I was going to get Bob Costas," Ray said. "It was a reality in my head. It may sound weird, but it was just a frame of mind."

Being a life-long Cub fan didn't hurt Ray's success either. But even Ray admits that he was a little fuzzy on Cub history.

Through the process of learning the ins and outs of documentaries, Ray said, he also learned a lot about the Cubs, their fans and Major League Baseball.

"I was surprised that I really didn't come up with a conclusion as to why so many people follow the Cubs," Ray said. "Mostly, people came up with stuff like, this is the way they were raised. They look at the Cubs like an extension of their family."

"I also learned that it's a really good thing. There's so much negative stuff around - as far as entertainment. This is a wholesome thing and it brings people together."

That's part of the reasoning that helped Ray sway Costas into narrating the film. All it took, he said, was a number of phone calls and some mailing of scripts and film footage before Costas agreed to take the gig.

The 53-minute film also features interviews with Chip Caray, Dutchie Caray, Billy Williams, Ron Santo and George F. Will.

"If I didn't have a big-time narrator," Ray said, "I wasn't sure people were going to take this seriously. Bob Costas was really generous. He's a really cool guy. Really classy. He is, what I think, exactly what you hear and what you see. I really respect him."

But along with the good, Ray said, he also learned a little about baseball, the business.

"Money is definitely what it's all about now," Ray said. "I think if people knew the inner-works, they may stop attending games. It's pretty wicked. Just Major League Baseball and the Cubs - they have the little guy by the horns. I don't really think they care a whole lot about the fans."

Ray's documentary, on the other hand, is about the fans. It contains no actual game footage - just actual footage from the stands and beyond.

It's a "slice-of-life" piece, as Ray puts it. A fast moving, film that's not really anything "anyone is going to look to deep into."


"That's the cool part about it," Ray said. "It's completely from the fans' perspective. It's their story. It's not the mil-

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filmmaker

lion-dollar athlete or the GM that's making the bad trades.

"It should be one of those things that even if you're not a fan of the Cubs, you can relate to this. Husker fans should be able to relate to this. I think when people watch it, they will say, 'Oh my gosh, that reminds me of this guy I know that follows' whatever team.' It's like candy. Everybody likes candy."



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