

## Balls, Strikes, and Stories

CRAIG HARRISON

Baseball's pace, rich history, and 162-game season is tailor made for stories. Broadcasters tell stories of players, teams, rivalries, seasons, ballparks, and more.

Jon Miller, ESPN Sunday Night Baseball and San Francisco Giants announcer, carries on this storytelling tradition. His blend of humor, history, stories, impressions, and excitement make even the most lopsided games a listener's delight.

### Storytellers in His Family

Miller was born in Marin County, California. His father was a navigator during the Korean War. His grandfathers were both storytellers. One served under General Pershing in World War I and kept a diary, the other rode the rails during the Depression.

"They were all funny, looking for laugh lines," Miller says. "We'd take camping trips in Oregon and Washington. Sitting around the campfire, my father's father would play the banjo. All of a sudden there were 60 people there, listening to his stories."

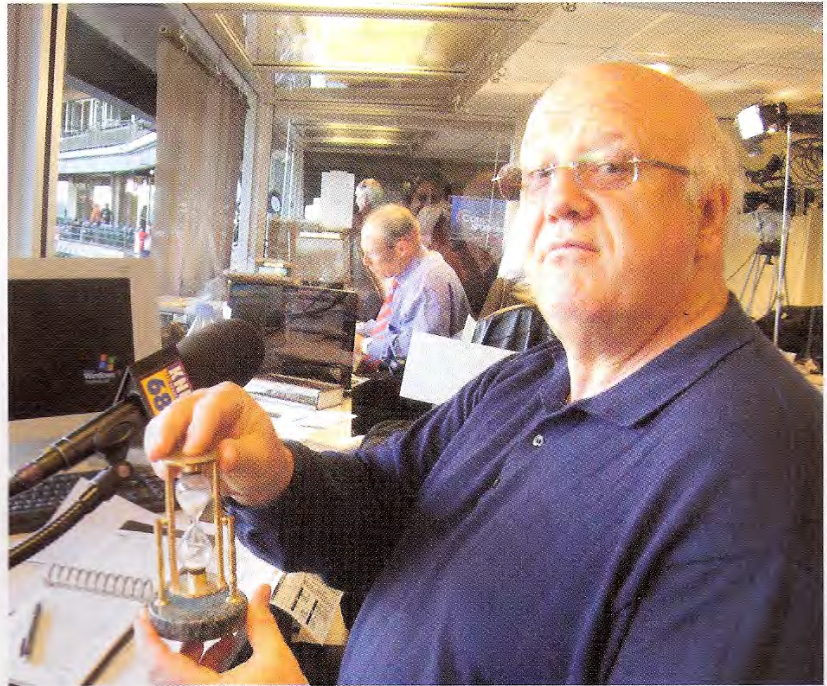
### Diamond in the Rough

As a child, Miller played Strat-O-Matic Baseball, narrating the action. "I used to do the crowd noises and PA announcers. I'd be Russ Hodges doing a Giants game, Vin Scully broadcasting the Dodgers. I'd be Chuck Thompson doing a Baltimore game, Bob Shepard at Yankee stadium. I loved the sights and sounds of the ballpark."

As a San Francisco Giants announcer, Miller remembers vividly his first live game, a 19-8 shellacking of the Dodgers at Candlestick Park in 1962, in which Felipe Alou, Jim Davenport, and Willie Mays all homered.

or between batters. If it went longer than that, it was too long." In the press box, Miller uses an egg timer to keep his stories short and in the flow of the game.

Tune in and you are likely to hear Miller mix bits of Spanish and



Jon Miller

### The Voice(s) of the Game

Miller broadcast for the Boston Red Sox and Baltimore Orioles before becoming the Giants announcer. His initial notoriety came in part from rain-delay impressions of other announcers.

### Storytelling Influences

"Vin Scully taught me to have a story for every situation. Ernie Harwell said you should be able to start and finish a story between pitches

Japanese with wonderful word play in English in his stories. He finds humor in everything from Doppler radar forecasts, to road trips, to the quirkiness that is baseball. Give a listen. ☺

Craig Harrison  
([www.HackinBoo.com](http://www.HackinBoo.com))

tells tales of humor and humanity. Among his baseball highlights: meeting Willie Mays as a seven-year-old in 1968. He longs to hear the phrase, "The Giants win the pennant," again in his lifetime.