

NINE INNINGS: notes of a color commentator



1. Hello everybody, what a beautiful day for baseball! There's some mild green traffic outside, a low-hanging chunk of emerald mud tilted up towards right field, and the grass is hooker's green. We're all wondering what to expect, and we are underway! Here comes Fishman, out to the mound! She's a fireplug, a five foot utility slinger, a northpaw with a real cannon, originally out of the Philly club with time spent in Illinois and now New York City. She's known for really being in the paint: throwing out some gritty, cruddy, besmirched-looking stuff, but with static, some flounce and some bounce, and the result is a picture of motion. You never know, today she might go wild in the strike zone. Right now she's throwing out fungo with a rugged clattering. Chunky, sullied, or proper, Fishman's not likely to surrender any crooked numbers. And she's reading signs as she goes into her wind-up: and BANG! Right out from under, a grey wedge grooves up the alley, tilting low and across, and HOLY COW, it's a cement mixer, and it hits a receiver, an ear! What a dastardly thing! Green junk on the side, a hanging green snowman with low velocity but lots of movement. Snake jazz! Looks like Fishman's cancelling Christmas! Green on green don't stand a chance, and the field is littered with shards of crimson. It's a slinger! Gas, heat, hair, the jinegar express! Nothing gets by Fishman in a corner.



2. Fishman's got stuff. There's a nubber of grain holding up a corner high above left field, and blottings outside the right field zone. But look out! Fishman's a powder keg! She throws out a side-armer starting high and away, a two-to-nine pitch, and whoa! What kind of action is this? it's a vapor trail with a volume inside, or a chopper on the plains, low velocity but lots of movement. Fishman's stratosphere is tumbling, a bloop cloud in slo-mo. You can lick a stamp, cuz this is heft meets airmail! Oh what a spinetingling moment! She's putting on a laser show-- punchados of umber, excuse-me swings of dirty violet and dingy ochre cutting into the embroidery, a dependable turquoise board ticking underneath. This is a twin killing. What's her secret? As she always says, hit 'em where they ain't.

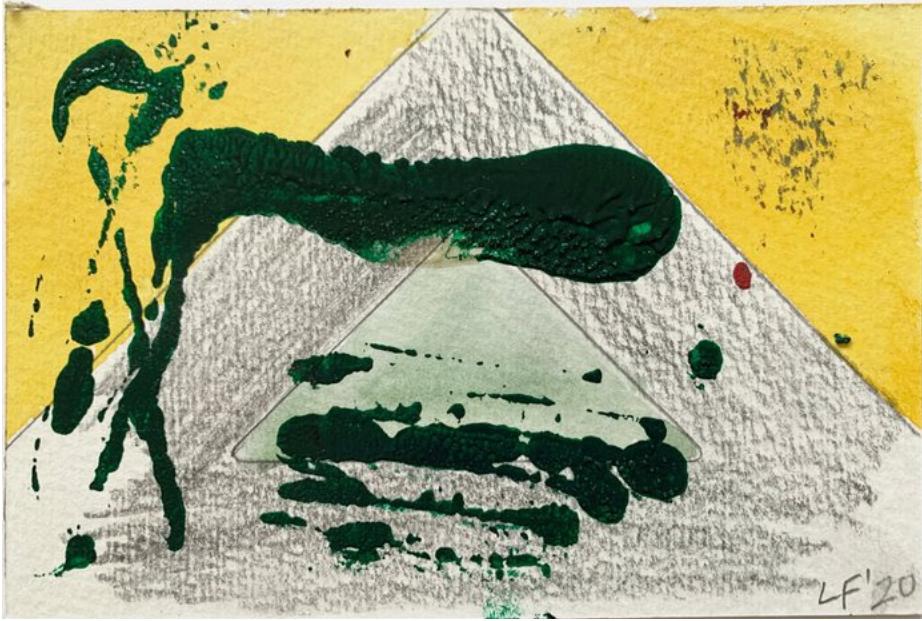


3. Fishman toes the slab, and sets up. She's painting the corner umber with tiny pops of aqua over to right field and far back of the strike zone, boxing them in behind the backstop. Wild combination: a sludgeball low and loose. I can read lips and she's not praying. Fishman's a heaver, sometimes sending out an ugly finder. She hits it high, she hits it deep. Give it to the butcher boy and get him home juiced, plunked, like a spilled rainbow. Fishman's operating from her wheelhouse, with power gork, a blooper and a bleeder. Can I get a reservation for this?! Fishman's a maestro, an artist: this could be in an art gallery!



4.

Fishman takes an extremely long stride to the plate and slings a darkness coming from up and under. Two flings, no hocus pocus, just focus: a green shadow and two boops. The count is three and two. She's squeezing the zone like a banjo hitter. A dark green umber, shading to a cerulean, oh man, she's got filthy stuff. The stains are in the shade. Gimme a tater, Louise.... OH! it's grounded to short. But Fishman is resourceful! Down the field it comes, and look what's coming up! She pastes an Eephus curve to the right! The game is on the board! Fishman's crafty, she scored more: she threw out a dipsy-doodle, blew the greens open like a speed merchant, and shut the door on this situational stuff. A Lawrence Welk play, a one two three! Boo yah! Light this baby up! Fishman votes the ball off the island.



5.

OH! Fishman's in the hot corner now! Her howitzer is oiled. She's cruising. This is a new game, high and tight. Now to her wind-up: and Fishman throws out some frozen rope, tight and sharp, with what looks to be the bagger right inside the five hole. It's gonna be a zone play! She blows the outfield open, up top and down below. Fishman's adding mustard. Grab some pine, meat! She's off the schneid! A little off here, a little off there & you're done, take a seat. She's roughing in around home plate, no runners on board, but the ball itself is dialed up. And a crack of the bat: OH! Swung on and belted! It's a big viridian grapefruit-- Fishman's bringing the juice back now! Clear the deck: cannonball coming! She grooves a head of lettuce up the elevator shaft, leaving only a tiny couple of pills of red on the right. There's a herky-jerky marigold left in the outfield, even a smirch of emerald below. Is it five pitches or six? 'Cuz she is GONE!



6.

Fishman is throwing out a clinic in this round. A thin grey wash hems in the far right field while Fishman holds everything else down from the mound, a solid slab of pitch that extends out from the base to where it ends with a fat ripple. She defines the strike zone with some Philly chop, malachite, the color of someone's eyes, that pulls across the field all the way to the edge of left field, but not quite over it. Scratchy as it goes but with a gust. You can almost taste the pressure now. Fishman lifts her cap, and runs her fingers through her grey hair. Then five strong pitches away and wide, choppers, coming into play from off the field, three vertical slats and two slabs torqued into diagonal, of varying solidity-- from skyscraper-tight to the kiss of a dinghy. Holy cow, this is weather all over the field, from here to yonder, way past the back wall. Fishman's thrown out a vertical scrim, a weather system of interference, flecking—this is no grid for measuring! This is a tonal net! Like at sea. Fishman's putting on a crooked number, covering her bases, and her knuckler is dancing. We're in trouble. She really put it away in this one, by blowing it open. This is real fancy stuff.



7. Things are breaking open. Fishman's mad now, spitting magic words and throwing out fast junk. She's pasting yakkers, wrinkles, zigzagers and pretzels. She's putting the hurt on the paper, and this time with emergency hack. Oh my! She's juiced, she's ripping it, and it's off the wall! She's in the catbird seat, now going deep—no! She started to go after it but said no ma'am. No slump here, send me a slurve! Now Fishman's belting out her biggest number: and it's nothing less than salami! OH! She drills deep to left. Are you serious? OUCHTOWN! Population: you! Fishman, the savior of misbehavior, is rumbling, bumbling and stumbling. Get outta here!

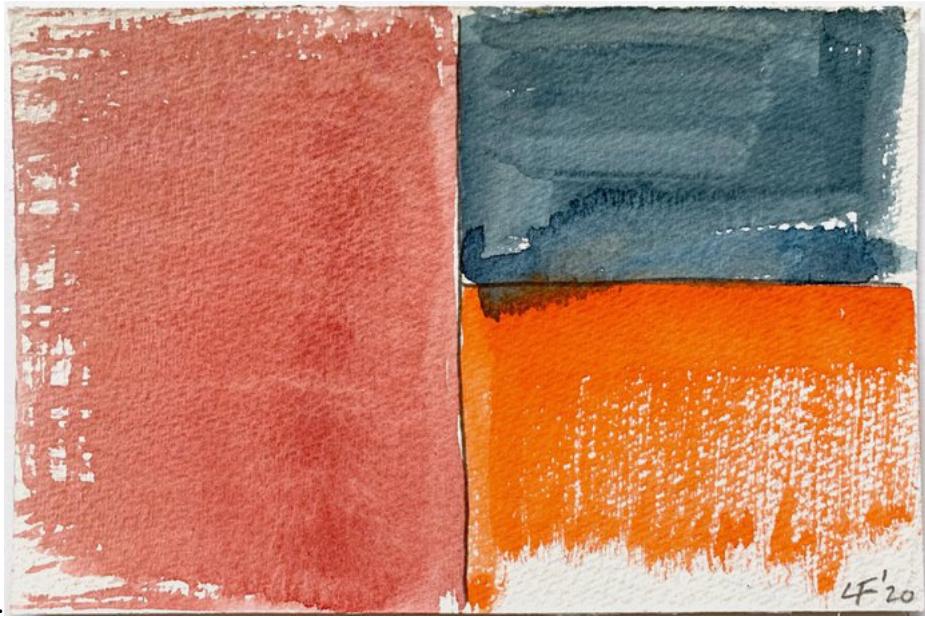
(the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch)

Stretch, stretch, stretch. What's your excitement level? Eight million people are watching and a million have butterflies in their stomachs.



8.

Fishman strides out to the mound and here's the pitch: she slings a fastball to left field, then follow a flurry of 12 short hacks. She's aiming the ball and belting it down the stretch, and here they come: flashing the leather. Her deal is a deuze, and these are no cookies! Off to the right she will not have play. This is a rally, with a dozen Fishman bazookas sliding past the batter's eye. She's way ahead in the count, and she's doctoring the ball, and -OH! How she's hurling! Look at that thing go-- if that were a fish you'd throw it back, but it's not a fish! It's a slutter, a brown weenie sent right down the middle of the plate! Fishman comes from way downtown: looks like she was waiting for the local but caught the express!



9.

Fishman's a box artist so this oughtta be good, but she's not in a wind-up yet. You can't blame a woman for pushing just a little bit now: at a moment like this, the mound is the loneliest place in the world, but she's as cool as the other side of the pillow. Fishman shakes herself a little bit, hitches up her belt and toes the rubber. Looks in to get a sign, one away from the promised land. The time on the scoreboard is 9:44 am, the date is April 27, twenty-twenty. That's gone on notice. Wait a minute: Woah Nelly! Fishman's painting wide ones, and they're heading for orbit! HOLY COW! On a scale of one to Louise Fishman, boom goes the dynamite, and she hit it on the screws. They say this is a man's game, but it's Goodbye Mr Spalding. She eyed it, she tried it and she buy'd it! You can write her name in capital letters, the F stands out and then the ishman. She just shut the door, and doctor, you can hang a star on that one. Raise the Jolly Roger and light up the board, cuz this baby is gone. Goodbye! See ya! But don't ask me anything else about it: I'm just a pink hat.