

SEPTEMBER 2025

A Time for Understanding

I normally avoid controversial or political issues, but I feel that the recent death of Charlie Kirk deserves a comment.

We saw him open a dialogue with college students across our nation, and those conversations helped young people better understand and express their convictions. He was respectful of the opinions of others and asked them to respect his, as well.

I hope and pray that our nation will find common ground and we'll do a better job of listening to each other rather than pulling farther apart.

A TIME FOR
Understanding

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The day I met Robert Redford - well, **ALMOST!**

It was about a zillion years ago when my Cleburne, Texas, friend, Jay Lewis, and I were snow skiing at the Park City, Utah, resort. As we approached a ski lift, we saw **Robert Redford** talking with a man, and that man's wife skied up to them.

The man said, "Susan, I'd like you to meet Bob Redford. Bob, this is my wife, Susan."

We were never within 50 feet of Robert Redford, and he never noticed or acknowledged us, which was fine. He was in a conversation with friends.

When we recounted the story with friends that evening, Jay excitedly said, "We saw Robert Redford on the ski slopes!"

I then interjected, "Well, for those of us who know him... **He's BOB!**"

Thus was my almost-famous almost-brush with Robert Redford. Or "BOB" for those of us who knew him well!

What celebs have you "almost met"?



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Savannah Bananas: My Taylor Swift or Garth Brooks

"Last year, when the Savannah Bananas played here, a Houston Astros season ticket holder told me – 'This was the stupidest, silliest, dumbest version of baseball we ever saw, but it was an INSANE amount of fun!'"

Those were the words of a concession attendant at the **Savannah Bananas** game in Houston on Friday evening. He shared how some fans responded to the Bananas after they had seen their first **Bananaball** (what the Bananas call their brand of baseball) performance in 2024.

Your bucket list concert may feature **Taylor Swift** or **Garth Brooks**. For Rebecca, it's **Barry Manilow**. Or even 50 Cent – who, surprisingly performed in a Bananas dance routine before he threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

This past Friday evening, she treated me (my birthday gift!) to see the Savannah Bananas at **Daikin Park** in Houston – my bucket list event!

If you're not familiar with this phenomenon, here are a few fast facts:

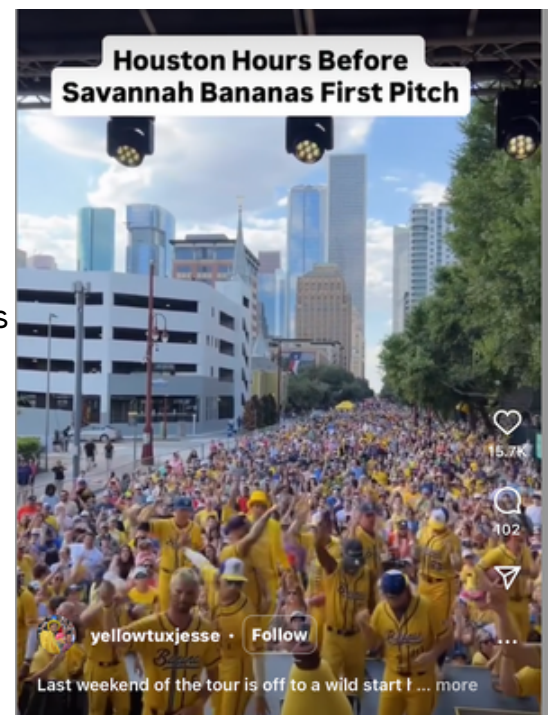
1. ESPN calls the Savannah Bananas "[The Greatest Show in Sports](#)"
2. The Bananas focus on **entertainment** – they just use baseball as their vehicle
3. The game lasts **two hours** instead of the traditional three hours of an MLB baseball game
4. There is constant entertainment – from [trick plays](#) to [dance routines](#) on the field
5. The team hired a [full-time choreographer](#) in 2018, so he has taught the non-dancer Bananas how to boogie, do-si-do, line dance, and more
6. The players and team owner Jesse Cole are relentless in their willingness to **sign autographs – for FREE**, unlike most pro athletes

They involve fans in their clever hijinks, bringing people onto the field to participate in fun skits such as:

- **Which parent do you love more?** A young child answers which parent is more fun, buys them more gifts, and gives the best hugs – the losing parent gets a **pie in the face** from the child!
- **Kissing contest:** 3 married couples are charged with giving the best kiss – and in our game, the couple married 48 years won by **making out like teenagers**.

The Bananas rotate playing their three other teams – the **Texas Tailgaters** (who we saw), the **Firefighters**, and the **Party Animals**

The Savannah Bananas have mastered social media, creating their own content on [YouTube](#), TikTok, [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).



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You may have seen them on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon on Monday, September 15. [This video will give you a fun introduction](#) to their style of entertainment.

Here was the schedule for game day. It was more of a festival than a ballgame:

- 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.: Early merchandise sale at the ballpark
- 2:00–3:00 p.m.: Player Appearances in the stadium plaza
- 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.: Before the Peel Show:– complete with live music performed by team members and two dance squads – **WELL OVER 10,000 ATTENDEES!**
- 4:30 p.m.: Gates open to the stadium
- 6:30 – 7:00 p.m.: The Pre-Game Show: Dances, live music, and more
- 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.: The baseball game – 2 hours of outrageous fun!
- 9:00 – 11:00 p.m.: Post-game live music from the concert stage

My friend **Jim “Mattress Mack” McIngvale, owner of Gallery Furniture** in Houston, introduced me to the Savannah Bananas two years ago when they played at the minor league ballpark in Sugar Land.

The Bananas played before 41,000 fans on Friday night and Saturday night in Houston – 82,000 total fans.

This year, they have played in front of **TWO MILLION** fans in their World Tour.

During the merchandise pre-sale event, I visited with **Jared Orton, President of The Savannah Bananas**, who has been with the team from Day 1. He shared that the team struggled to find an audience, an issue that faces most minor league baseball teams.

He said the team injected some fun with a few trick plays as the team won its league. Next came the question: **How do we go from good to great in a baseball world where everyone does the same thing?**

Their answer: Make the game **FUN. MAKE IT OUTRAGEOUS. INVOLVE THE FANS INTENSELY.** To quote **Walt Disney** – “Emotions Trump Everything.” Help fans fall in love with the team.

I compared the team to the humor website, www.Babylonbee.com, which made outrageous predictions that, now, five years later, have come true. I asked Jared if their wildest “what if?” ideas from five years ago are now bearing fruit.

He said, “Yes, without a doubt.”



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Watch the Savannah Bananas on YouTube and make plans to see them in 2026. The team will announce TWO MORE teams and the 2026 schedule on Saturday, October 9, on ESPN+ and ESPN2. Let's hope they might come to our area.

By the way, Savannah Bananas owner Jesse Cole produced a video that I use to introduce my podcast each week. In it, he says: **"And now, presenting the official... non-official... non-sponsor... of the Savannah Bananas, but a big fan. Please welcome John Fletcher!"**

If I'm not their biggest fan, I'm one of them.

The #1 rule of the Bananas: **FANS FIRST**. That means:

- Everything the team does focuses on **"How can we create an even better experience for our fans?"**
- When you buy merchandise, there is **no shipping fee. No sales tax** (it's included, so there are no surprises)
- You **won't see any advertising** on the field at their home games in Savannah, Georgia
- You **won't find a game day program with ads in it**
- Your ticket for a game in Savannah **includes ALL the food and non-alcoholic drinks you want**

**How are you putting your FANS...
Or your CUSTOMERS... FIRST?**



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Tiebreaker: Mattress Mack is Hyper-Local

I visited with **Mattress Mack** as Rebecca and I drove home to Arlington on Saturday. We had watched TV on Saturday morning and saw one of Mack's TV commercials, plus a commercial from another furniture store.

Here's the difference I observed: Mattress Mack is **HYPER-LOCAL**. He supports his home community, the local nonprofits, and schools.

When hurricanes such as Katrina (2005) impacted Houstonians years ago, Mack opened his stores to house hundreds of people whose homes had been flooded. He fed them and let them sleep on brand new beds and mattresses.

And when they returned home, he GAVE them the mattresses they had slept on.
So generous!

All this took place while the national-branded furniture stores did... **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!** I don't see how ANYONE in Houston could justify buying their furniture anywhere but Gallery Furniture.

I gave Mack a copy of the book, "[When God Winks at You](#)" by **SQuire Rushnell**. As I told him, "**God winks at you through others, and He winks at others through YOU!**"

Mattress Mack will be my featured guest on an upcoming edition of my podcast, [15 on Fridays with Fetch](#), in October.

