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THE BILL BUCKNER ERROR: LESSONS DECADES LATER

 Francis Petit

Associate Dean for Global Initiatives and Partnerships, Adjunct Associate Professor of Marketing, Fordham University, Gabelli School of Business, USA.

Email: petit@fordham.edu Tel: 6462562991



ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this research is to determine what lessons, if any, society can learn from the Bill Buckner Error that goes beyond Baseball. The methods of this research include a historical study of the Bottom of the 10th Inning in Game 6 of the 1986 World Series along with the subsequent aftermath for Bill Buckner. The results of this qualitative study indicate that there are learning takeaways for all that go beyond baseball including how Bill Buckner responded to the ordeal and how the passing of time can change perspectives. In addition, a key question that emerged for future research is what impact did the Bill Buckner Error have on the Red Sox trading him away the following season? Furthermore, this research relates to the world of sports in that fans should understand that sports professionals are human and one error along with one moment in time should not define a career.

Contribution/Originality: This study is unique in that it investigates not only the Bill Buckner Error from a historical perspective in terms of the actual event and post event developments but it also analyzes the lessons that society can learn decades later from this historic moment in sports history.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bill Buckner had an outstanding career as a professional baseball player within Major League Baseball (MLB). His name, however, is forever linked to his infamous fielding error in Game 6 of the [World Series \(1986\)](#). This error now defines Bill Buckner's legacy as a professional athlete. At the time of his error, Bill Buckner was playing for the Boston Red Sox and it occurred towards the end of his 22-year MLB career.

With this as a background, the purpose of this research is to examine the Bill Buckner Error and its aftermath in detail. In addition, the goal of this research is to link any potential lessons that society can learn as a result of this historic moment in sports history.

Overall, there is little to no academic research on the Bill Buckner Error from a historical standpoint along with potential lessons and takeaways for society as a result of this event. This study will therefore bridge the current research gap that now exists within this area.

1.1. Bill Buckner – Career

Bill Buckner was born on December 14, 1949 (Baseball Reference, Bill Buckner). Upon the completion of Napa High School, Bill Buckner was drafted by Major League Baseball in 1968 by the Los Angeles Dodgers in the Second Round as the twenty fifth (25th) overall pick (English, SABR.org). In a career that spanned 20-plus years, Bill

Buckner played for the following Major League Baseball Teams: Los Angeles Dodgers (1969-1976), Chicago Cubs (1977-1983, 1984), Toronto Blue Jays (1984, 1987), Boston Red Sox (1984-1986, 1987, 1990), California Angeles (1987, 1988), and the Kansas City Royals (1988, 1989) (Baseball Reference, Bill Buckner).

In terms of statistics, Bill Buckner had an overall career Batting Average of .289 as well as 9,397 At Bats, 174 Home Runs, 1,208 Runs Batted In (RBIs), 183 Stolen Bases and 2,715 Base Hits along with 1,077 Runs Scored (Baseball Reference, Bill Buckner).

In addition, Bill Buckner was an All-Star for one season and won the Major League Batting Title with a .324 Batting Average in 1980 as a Chicago Cub. He also ranks 66th All Time in Major League Baseball History with Base Hits, 50th All-Time with Career At-Bats, 149 All Time with RBIs and 153 All Time for getting on base. Bill Buckner, interestingly, was also playing Left Field for the Los Angeles Dodgers when Atlanta Brave's Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth's All Time Home Run record (715) on April 8, 1974 (Anderson, 2019).

Furthermore, Bill Buckner, towards the end of his career, delivered 110 RBIs in 1986 with the Boston Red Sox which ranked second among his teammates on this World Series bound team (Gregory, 2019). He also, in 1985, played 162 consecutive games at First Base for the Boston Red Sox which tied a Major League Baseball record (Baseball Reference, Boston Red Sox Team History).

Lastly, Bill Buckner had a Batting Average of .300 or higher in seven (7) seasons and according to some baseball journalists, he came within a season and a half of the elite 3,000 Base Hit Club (Robbins, 2012). As a fielder, he also played over 600 games in the outfield and over 1,500 games at First Base (Baseball Reference, Bill Buckner). Bill Buckner also had thirty one (31) stolen bases in 1975 that helped lead the Los Angeles Dodgers to the National League Pennant (Kepner, 2019).

Bill Buckner passed away on May 27, 2019 after battling Lewy Body Dementia (Sterling & Griggs, 2019). While Bill Buckner has not been inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame, his career statistics, accomplishments and longevity coupled with his resilience and ability to play through pain has allowed him to have, in what many consider, a very strong career within Major League Baseball (ESPN, May 27, 2019).

2. METHODS

A historical study of the Bottom of the 10th Inning in Game 6 of the World Series (1986) along with the subsequent aftermath was conducted. Upon completing this qualitative research, key takeaways were developed in what society could learn from this historic moment in sports and its aftermath. The goal of this historical study was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the Bill Buckner Error from a professional and personal perspective. In addition, the goal was to see what positive or negative lessons society could learn from the Bill Buckner Saga. It should be noted that very little academic research has focused on the Bill Buckner Error. What has been primarily produced has been research on the essence of blame and interpretation which makes reference to the Bill Buckner Error but does not fully analyze this event as this research will do. What does exist, however, are secondary sources (i.e. periodicals) that analyze the entire ordeal from varying perspectives. As a result, this research will incorporate both portals of information.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Events Leading to that Famous Error

In 1986, the Boston Red Sox won the American League Pennant and were headed to the World Series in which their opponents would be the New York Mets. The Boston Red Sox were in the midst of a 68-year championship drought as 1918 was their last World Series title (Baseball Reference, Boston Red Sox Team History).

In order to win the World Series, a team has to win four games out of the seven game series.

On October 25, 1986, the Red Sox / Mets World Series entered Game 6. This game was played in New York City at Shea Stadium. The Boston Red Sox were leading the series 3-2 and were within one game of winning the World Series (E:60, 2011).

At the end of the 9th and final inning in Game 6, the game was tied 3-3. The game, therefore, had to go into "extra innings" in order to determine the winner (World Series, 1986).

In the top of the 10th inning, the Red Sox scored two runs thus increasing the lead to 5-3. In the bottom of the 10th inning the Mets had their back up against the wall. They had to, in essence, score at least two (2) runs in order to continue playing. Otherwise, the Red Sox would win the World Series (World Series, 1986).

Within this inning, Calvin Schiraldi of the Red Sox was pitching. The first batter for the Mets was Wally Backman. On the third pitch of the at bat, Backman would fly out to Left Field leading to the first out of the inning. The Red Sox were now within two outs of winning the World Series (World Series, 1986).

The second batter of the inning was Keith Hernandez. On the fourth pitch of the at bat, Hernandez would fly out to Center Field. There was now two outs and the Red Sox were within one out from winning the World Series. At this point, the nationally televised broadcast would announce that Marty Barrett of the Red Sox was the Miller Lite Beer Player of the Game (World Series, 1986).

The next batter was Gary Carter who would hit a single on the fourth pitch to Left Field keeping the Mets "hopes alive". After Carter, Kevin Mitchell would then hit a single to Center Field after the second pitch. Now Carter is on second base and Mitchell, the tying run, is on first base (World Series, 1986).

The next batter for the Mets was Ray Knight and after going to an 0-2 count, Knight would hit a single to Center Field on the third pitch scoring Gary Carter from second base advancing the score to 5-4.

At this point, John McNamara, the Red Sox Manager, would make a pitching change and would insert Bob Stanley as the pitcher. With a score of 5-4, Stanley's goal was to get one more out without the Mets scoring and the Red Sox would be World Series Champions. It is important to note that Knight now is on first base and Mitchell, the tying run, is on third base (World Series, 1986).

Batting now for the Mets would be Mookie Wilson who after four pitches would be at a 2-2 count. Wilson would continue to stay alive by fouling the ball. On the seventh pitch within the at bat, Bob Stanley would throw a wild pitch past Red Sox Catcher Rich Gedman. This would score Mitchell from third base thus tying the game (5-5) and would advance Knight to second base (World Series, 1986).

On the tenth pitch, Mookie Wilson would then hit a ground ball to First Baseman Bill Buckner which would go through Buckner's legs. Buckner's error would advance Knight from second base to home plate thus being the winning run for the Mets in Game 6 (World Series, 1986).

Overall, the Red Sox would come very close to winning Game 6 and the World Series but would have a collapse after the Keith Hernandez at bat. Within this inning, it should also be noted that the Red Sox had eight opportunities in which they were one strike away from winning the World Series between Ray Knight's and Mookie Wilson's at bat (World Series, 1986).

The series was now tied at 3-3 and the Mets would win Game 7 of the World Series at Boston on October 27, 1986. It should be noted that in Game 7 the Mets would come back from a three run deficit to win the game and the World Series (E:60, 2011).

3.2. Environment Post Error

Bill Buckner's error was not received well by Boston Red Sox fans and sports writers along with other fans of Major League Baseball. More specifically, the Buckner Error is "entrenched in American Folklore" (Barra, 2011).

It is also noted as Baseball's most "infamous error" (E:60, 2011). It is also an error that "for years lived in Red Sox infamy" (ESPN., 2019).

Mr. Bob Ryan, a long time Boston Globe Sports Columnist, who had a deep understanding of Red Sox fans, mentioned the following regarding the Bill Buckner Error.

When the ball went through Bill Buckner's legs hundreds of thousands of people did not just view that as an error, they viewed it as something he (Bill Buckner) had done to them personally (ESPN., 2019).

Overall, Bill Buckner's biggest mistake of his career was made on the "world stage" (Kahn, 2019). In addition, Boston Red Sox fans not only took it personally but Buckner has also been solely blamed for the demise of the Red Sox during the 1986 World Series (Coates & Tognazzini, 2012). Some have noted that this blame occurred due to the "Team Halo Effect" in which individual (s) as opposed to teams are blamed for failures (Naquin & Tynan, 2003). This is especially true if the outcome impacts personal wellbeing however that is defined (Madrigal, October 2008). Others have indicated that the passionate fan base coupled with the history of disappointment within Red Sox Nation has also led to this finger pointing (Caterine, 2004; Wilkinson, 2016). Such finger pointing can also result in the seriousness of how competition is viewed not only within athletics but also within everyday life. (Johnson & Magel, 2016). Others have further stated that this environment of continual disappointment has led Red Sox fans to feel not only frustrated but also victimized, disappointed and betrayed (Wilkinson, 2016). Whether this is morally fair or not Bill Buckner was blamed for the Red Sox collapse in the 1986 World Series (Rosen, 2002). As a result, this one play, in essence, not only defined his career but also created a sports attached identity within all facets of his life (Manswell & Barnicle, 2018).

It should also be noted that the media has further fueled this perception. The title of Sports Columnist Phil Pepe's article in the *Daily News* (New York) on October 26, 1986 stated "Bambino's Curse Lives! Bill Buckner Error allows Mets to rally in Game 6" (Pepe, 1986). Such headlines were common. Even in death Bill Buckner's costly error was scattered across the headlines either in the title or first paragraph of the AP news coverage.

Bill Buckner had also become a national punchline. He mentioned in an interview that he received a call from a late night television host asking him if he was suicidal as a result of this costly error (E:60, 2011). His infamous error was also an episode topic of the comedic program "Curb Your Enthusiasm" (Kepner, 2011). His error was ingrained in the American fabric and it defined Bill Buckner as a player (Crouch, 2019).

Overall, on that specific play, Bill Buckner was playing purposely deep in the infield ensuring that a ground ball would not get passed him. In an interview with Buckner, he indicated that he was wearing an old glove that closed shut prior to contact and it was a "mechanical" problem with the glove (E:60, 2011). That was the reason for the error.

Regardless of the reason, Boston Red Sox fans would not be accommodating or forgiving. It was quite common that angry fans would express their hostility on sports talk radio wishing that Bill Buckner would "rot in hell" (E:60, 2011). Many Red Sox fans would "hiss" at the mention of Bill Buckner's name (Deane, 2019). Buckner would also be yelled at in the streets of Boston by angry fans. Boston had become "hostile" territory for Bill Buckner, his wife and three children. In essence, Buckner had become "Public Enemy #1" (E:60, 2011).

The Buckner family decided to leave Boston and move to a ranch in Idaho when their children started to be mocked in school (E:60, 2011). Boston fans were not ready to forgive Bill Buckner for what they perceived that he had done to them personally for the Red Sox collapse in Game 6 (Werner, 2016).

There were, however, some sympathetic perspectives. Darren Rovell, a Sports Business Analyst, who works for The Action Network, stated the following regarding the Buckner Error.

Bill Buckner's death comes with unexpected guilt. The guilt of an 8-year old me, who thanks in part of his error (it's Calvin Schiraldi and Bob Stanley too) got his only major sports championship (Mets, Jets, Nets, Islanders). Rest in Peace Bill. I am sorry my joy

came with your pain (The Spun).

Apparently, Rovell felt bad for Buckner's plight.

In addition, Brian Downing, a former Major League Baseball Player, has stated..."You (fans and media) destroyed a man's life over one pitch... The guy was just not the same after that ... No one was sympathetic" (Modiano, 2019). Bobby Valentine, a former Major League Baseball Player and Manager, has also stated that the public reaction and perception of that error was very destructive on Buckner (Kepner, 2011).

Perhaps Bill Buckner had said it best when he stated the following:

I feel like the guy who got put away for a crime he did not
commit, and then the DNA evidence comes back 30 years
later and the guy gets out of jail. What do you say for the
30 years he spent suffering? I don't feel like I committed a crime

(Modiano, 2019).

As noted, the Buckner Error was not received well by Boston Red Sox fans and beyond.

3.3. *Who is to Blame?*

When analyzing the events that occurred in the Bottom of the Tenth inning in Game 6, the blame for the Red Sox demise in that game cannot be directed solely to Bill Buckner. "Most experts acknowledge that the error was only one of several mistakes and blunders that contributed to the loss to the Mets" (English, SABR).

More specifically, there are four (4) additional individuals that must be added to the discussion.

The first is Red Sox Manager John McNamara. It was common for McNamara to take out Buckner and replace him with Dave Stapleton during the 8th and 9th innings of games because Buckner had, at this point, weak knees and ankles, and was considered a defensive liability (Kepner, 2011). Coaches are, in essence, responsible for ensuring that the physical abilities of their athletes (ie. speed, strength and power) are aligned to the needed situation at hand (Thuc, 2018). McNamara's actions followed this creed. However, instead McNamara in Game 6 decided to keep Buckner on the field at First Base until the conclusion of the game. He wanted Buckner to be on the field when the Red Sox secured their final out of their first World Series Championship since 1918 (Diamond, 2019). Such a decision was a "kind sentiment, but counts as managerial malfeasance" (Gregory, 2019). McNamara indicated the following in a 2011 interview: "If the ball was hit to either side of him and he couldn't get in front of it, yeah, I would of questioned myself... But he got to the ball" (Kepner, 2011).

Overall, McNamara wiped his hands clean of any culpability because Buckner positioned himself in front of the ball. Either way, many baseball analysts considered Buckner, at that point of his career, a defensive liability and have indicated he should not have been in the game. In addition, many have questioned why McNamara took out starting pitcher Roger Clemens in the 7th inning when he was still pitching well (Forums, 2006). McNamara, in a 2011 interview, further stated: "You put it in the proper perspective, what it means... It wasn't meant to be. You go on the best you can and try to put it behind you and not let it kill you...." (Kepner, 2011). As one can see, McNamara is trying to put this ugly episode behind him.

The second person that must be questioned is Relief Pitcher Calvin Schiraldi. As previously indicated, Schiraldi began the Tenth inning and needed to secure three quick outs for a Red Sox win. As stated previously, Schiraldi secured two quick outs with Backman and Fernandez. He then would not secure the third out as he allowed three consecutive singles with Carter, Mitchell and Knight. These three singles allowed for one run to score (5-4) and left Knight on First Base and Mitchell on Third Base when Schiraldi was pulled out of the game (World Series, 1986). As one can see, Schiraldi put the Red Sox in a very vulnerable position.

The next person that needs to be questioned is Relief Pitcher Bob Stanley who then entered the game. Stanley was facing Mookie Wilson and was charged to get him out either by strike out, ground out or fly out. As indicated earlier, on the seventh pitch of the at bat, Bob Stanley threw a wild pitch which scored Mitchell from Third Base to

tie the game and advanced Knight to Second Base in scoring position (World Series, 1986). On the tenth pitch, Wilson would then hit the famous ground ball to Buckner but many have questioned if Bob Stanley could have made it to First Base prior to Wilson to cover the base and receive the toss from Buckner if in fact he did not commit this error (Diamond, 2019). Overall, Stanley's wild pitch was a game changer.

Lastly, the person that must be questioned is Catcher Rich Gedman. Gedman, who calls the pitches for the Pitchers, suggested that Schiraldi throw Mitchell a chest high breaking ball which was not Schiraldi's best pitch. This led to the Mitchell single (Holtzman, 1986). Gedman then suggested Schiraldi to throw a strike down the middle of the plate to Knight which then led to a single. Knight, at that point, had a 0-2 count and many analysts indicated that Schiraldi should have thrown a bad pitch in which Knight would have to chase which could have led to the third and final out (Holtzman, 1986). In addition, many have indicated that Gedman did not make enough of a physical effort to stop Stanley's wild pitch. With a runner on third base (Mitchell), it has been noted that Catchers should do whatever it takes to prevent a wild pitch from getting past them. Many have indicated that Gedman did not do enough (Deane, 2019).

Finally, recent analytics have shed more light on that famous inning. More specifically, Pete Palmer has, through a simulation, analyzed more than 10,000 MLB games and has determined the following as can be seen below.

First, prior to the Carter at bat, the Boston Red Sox had a 98.7% chance of winning the game. In addition, after the Mitchell single, the Red Sox then had a 91.2% chance of winning the game. Then after the Knight single, the Red Sox had a 79.9% chance of winning the game. This 18.8% decline all occurred when Schiraldi was pitching (Deane, 2019).

Then after the Stanley wild pitch the Red Sox had a 37.85% chance of winning the game. As one can see, Stanley's wild pitch that scored Mitchell to tie the game had a profound statistical impact on the Red Sox's chances of winning the game (Deane, 2019).

In summary, Bill Buckner did not put the tying or winning run on base. He also did not throw the wild pitch nor did not make the decision to keep his defensive replacement on the bench during the 9th and 10th innings. However, it appears that Bill Buckner is directed all the blame for the Game 6 loss and the Red Sox collapse in the 1986 World Series.

3.4. Buckner's Response

Perhaps the most powerful lesson that can be taken from the Bill Buckner Error is how Buckner handled the entire ordeal. Ironically, prior to the World Series (1986) Buckner would foreshadow the events that were to transpire when he stated the following:

The dreams are that you will have a great series and win and
the nightmares are that you are going to let the winning run score on
a ground ball through your legs..... (E:60, 2011).

Whether Buckner knew it or not at the time, this one error would not only define his career but it would take sixteen years until 2004 for the fan's pain to subside until the Red Sox would win their next World Series (Werner, 2016).

Upon immediately following the game, Buckner took the blame for the loss of Game 6 and indicated he was looking forward to playing Game 7 of the World Series (E:60, 2011). He did not point fingers and he was the consummate teammate. In Game 7 in Boston, Buckner would have a solid performance securing two hits (2 for 4) and scoring a run. This would not be enough as the Mets would come back from a three run deficit to win the World Series (Barra, 2011). Overall, Buckner would play well in Game 7 and was a big reason why the Red Sox would make the World Series in 1986. However his career has been defined by one play and one "bad moment" (Sterling & Griggs, 2019).

At the conclusion of the 1986 World Series and for what would follow, Buckner would become, as stated previously, "Public Enemy #1". He was single handedly blamed for the World Series loss and his career was "reduced to one moment behind the bag at Shea Stadium" (E:60, 2011).

Buckner would fully understand the repercussion of his error when he stated the following:

You know there were a lot of players that were better than me. A lot of people would have trouble remembering their names but everybody still remembers me (E:60, 2011).

Buckner would then go on to state the following:

You can look at that series and point fingers in a whole bunch of different directions.... We did the best we could to win there and it just didn't happen and I don't feel I deserved (so much of the blame) (Walker, 2019).

Buckner, in a moment of frustration, could have easily blamed McNamara, Schiraldi, Stanley and Gedman for negatively contributing to what transpired in that famous inning. Buckner never "named names". He was the consummate teammate and professional and accepted his fate. "The Buck stopped with Buck" (Peregrine, 2019). This was further reinforced by Bobby Valentine when he stated"He (Bill Buckner) handled it amazingly well, but it killed him... There were probably fifty interviews where he (Bill Buckner) could have blamed McNamara, or said something else about Game 6. He never said any of that" (Kepner, 2011).

Moving forward, Buckner would learn to accept his circumstances. He realized that Game 6 was his "reality" whether he liked it or not. This was reinforced when he stated the following: "It just amazes me. I don't quite get it. I have come to the understanding that it is here to stay, so I try to look at it in a positive way" (O'Brien, 2019).

Buckner would indeed move forward, after a period of time, not with anger but with acceptance. In 2006 he would join Mookie Wilson for a photo opportunity and ball signing tour for the Mets fans. Buckner would sign balls with Mookie and interact with the fans. Buckner would be paid for his participation and his efforts assisted with his children's college tuition payments (E:60, 2011). Buckner, in essence, created a positive out of his negative situation.

Buckner would also be a part of Larry David's "Curb Your Enthusiasm" HBO Program with a comedic episode that mirrored his Game 6 Error. Buckner was able to be part of an episode that made light of his plight. Perhaps not everyone in his position could do such a move (Kepner, 2011).

In addition, Buckner politely declined to appear in a ceremony at Fenway Park in 2006 that honored the 1986 Boston Red Sox World Series Team. His absence was noted among the fans and the Red Sox management that day and after winning the second World Series in Boston in October 2007, the City of Boston and the Red Sox organization were ready to forgive and move on.

More specifically, on Opening Day in 2008, Bill Buckner had the honor of throwing the first pitch. In a ceremony that included a standing ovation lasting multiple minutes, Buckner, the Red Sox organization and the City of Boston were ready to forgive in what would be a "healing moment" (Walker, 2019). At that moment, Buckner indicated that he had forgiven the fans and the media for what they had put him and his family through (Crouch, 2019).

Bill Buckner's wife Jody has stated that she believes that "a lesser man would of crumbled under what we endured and he didn't. He rose and he taught us how to handle it in his quiet humble way" (E:60, 2011). Buckner's wife further stated that she resented seeing the signs the fans created that day at Fenway that stated... "We Forgive You Bill". Her response to those signs were as follows:

The thing that upset me going back there was seeing signs in the stands that said you're forgiven because the truth is we don't need forgiveness and we didn't go there seeking forgiveness because we have nothing to be forgiven for. We needed to forgive. We needed to forgive and I

think we have (E:60, 2011).

Lastly, Buckner's insightful takeaway from this entire ordeal was that what are we teaching our children from our actions. Buckner was the scapegoat and as a result he stated the following:

I don't think that in society in general that's the way we should operate. What are you teaching kids? Not to try because if you don't succeed you're going to be buried, so don't try (Kepner, 2011).

Perhaps this lesson is the most powerful of all.

3.5. Perspective with Time

As stated throughout this research, Bill Buckner's Error in Game 6 scarred his career and legacy. He was immediately and solely blamed for the Red Sox collapse within that championship series. He is a bone of contention for Red Sox fans who emphatically hold him in contempt. Yet with the passage of time there were alternative views and perspectives that emerged regarding Bill Buckner's legacy.

For example, in 2006, Forums.collectors.com published "5 Reasons You Can't Blame Bill Buckner". Within this article, it mentions that other players and factors had a negative impact on Game 6. It also shed light that there were factors, besides Buckner, that should be scrutinized (Forums, 2006).

In addition, a 2011 article "Bill Buckner Shouldn't be blamed in Red Sox loss in the 1986 World Series" discusses Buckner's role in that famous inning. Within this piece, it analyzes everything that occurred in that inning that led to the Mookie Wilson ground ball. It also scrutinizes the managerial decisions made by John McNamara (Barra, 2011).

Furthermore, in 2012, Bleacher Report published a piece of how Bill Buckner was, fairly or unfairly, not seriously considered for induction to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. In the piece it states that Buckner only qualified once for the Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA) ballot. With only a paltry ten percent of the votes, Buckner was then permanently dropped from eligibility. Even with a Batting Crown and hitting above .300 for seven seasons, Buckner could not generate serious consideration potentially because of his infamous error (Robbins, 2012).

Lastly, on the thirtieth (30th) anniversary of Game 6, Fox Sports published a piece that illustrated how Buckner's Error "extended the Red Sox Curse". While it goes into detail of that inning and error, the piece emphatically states that the Game 6 collapse was "hardly on him (Buckner) and there were others at fault" (Werner, 2016).

Overall, with the passage of time, additional perspectives emerged that did not place Buckner solely at fault. Nowhere is this more evident than upon Bill Buckner's death. With the announcement of his passing, it appears that Buckner finally got his due.

For example, upon the announcement of Bill Buckner's death, Mookie Wilson immediately released a statement which was as follows:

We had developed a friendship that lasted well over 30 years. I felt badly for some of the things he went through. Bill was a great, great baseball player whose legacy should not be defined by one play (E:60, 2011).

Mookie obviously realized that Buckner was not only an excellent baseball player but also endured so much as a result of his error.

In addition, the Red Sox Management stated the following upon Bill Buckner's passing:

... proud that Bill Buckner wore a Red Sox jersey..... His life was defined by perseverance, resilience and an insatiable will to win. Those are the traits he will be most remembered (ESPN., 2019).
..... personified toughness and grit and his determination to play through

pain defines him far more than any single play ever could (ESPN., 2019).

Whether these sentiments were sincere or just a public relations ploy, the Red Sox communicated gratitude and respect to Bill Buckner as a player and a person.

In addition, upon Bill Buckner's death, ABC News reported that he (Bill Buckner) should not be defined by this one mistake (ABC News). Similarly, CNN reported that one bad moment should not outweigh an outstanding career (Sterling & Griggs, 2019). In addition, the Daily News reported how absurd it was that Buckner became the "scapegoat" for the Red Sox collapse (Modiano, 2019).

There were other perspectives as well that support Buckner. The Society for American Baseball Research recently analyzed, in detail, who should be blamed for the Red Sox defeat from an analytics and sabermetrics perspective (English, SABR). In addition, the New Jersey Jewish News indicated the following:

Buckner's lapse was not a sin it was a mistake. He should be remembered not as a punchline but for being a good father, as well as a very good ball player (Kahn, 2019).

Overall, with the passing of time, there emerged a new found respect and admiration for Bill Buckner's career that goes well beyond his infamous error. Society should take note that the long term perspective, which can evolve over time, may be the most important of all.

3.6. Future Research

Did the Bill Buckner Error initiate his 1987 trade because the Red Sox believed keeping Buckner would be a detriment to their organizational reputation? This is an important question for future research.

Overall, a firm's reputation is critical. It has been noted that a firm's reputation is a form of capital that is often ignored in corporate strategy and not measured or captured within the financial statements (Jackson, 2004). While a firm's reputation is considered intangible, it must be strategically managed (Doorley & Garcia, 2015) which can lead to competitive sustainable advantage (Cravens & Oliver, 2006).

The reputation of an organization must be managed from the top and corporate boards must therefore take full responsibility in managing this reputation (Dowling, 2006). In order to manage this reputation effectively, guidelines must be set and continually reviewed for "reputational measurement" (Clardy, 2012). In addition, the goal must always be continued preservation of a firm's reputation as opposed to restoration post crisis (Koronis & Ponis, 2012).

Overall, it has been noted that reputation has a positive relationship to business performance (Goldring, 2015). In addition, corporate reputation building has gained widespread recognition across functional areas such as strategy, marketing, management and corporate social responsibility (Dowling, 2006). Lastly, it should be noted that there is an ethical dimension of corporate reputation that must be taken into account (Alzola, 2019).

With this as a background, one question that should be raised is why did the Red Sox trade away Buckner so soon after his error and if they kept him would it have negatively impacted their organizational reputation?

The Game 6 Error and immediate vitriol that emerged from Red Sox fans towards Bill Buckner was harsh. Perhaps the Red Sox management believed that keeping Buckner on the roster for all of 1987 was not worth it. If this were the case was this the right decision from a reputational management perspective?

Another question to explore is did the Red Sox do enough to support its employee during his "hour of need"? More specifically, Bill Buckner, throughout his stint, positively contributed to the Red Sox success. Therefore, did the Red Sox management do enough to publicly defend Buckner, immediately post error, to diffuse the fan anger that would build towards him? In essence, did the Red Sox management fail Buckner, its employee, and simply trade him away in order to protect its reputation? Such inquiries are suggested topics for future research.

Overall, society must take note. Organizations, in guarding their reputation, may make a short term decision at the expense of a productive employee.

4. CONCLUSIONS

After conducting a historical and qualitative study of the Bottom of the 10th Inning in Game 6 of the 1986 World Series along with the subsequent aftermath for Bill Buckner, there are two key learning takeaways for society. The first takeaway is how Bill Buckner handled the entire ordeal until his recent death. The second takeaway is how the passing of time can change perspectives.

Overall, Bill Buckner's error in the tenth inning of Game 6 of the [World Series \(1986\)](#) scarred his career, personal brand and life. While his error allowed for the winning run in this game, he should not have been solely blamed for the loss along with the entire Red Sox collapse within the World Series. Bill Buckner had a very successful Baseball career which was almost Hall of Fame worthy. His error, unfortunately, greatly overshadowed his career accomplishments within Major League Baseball. Society should take note as there are learning lessons from this historic moment in sports history.

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