I love baseball. Watching and listening to baseball is something I do every single day, either for a few minutes while I’m starting or wrapping up my day, or for a few hours in the background while I’m doing work and projects. With 30 teams and 162 games in the season, there is so much to enjoy.

There are so many statistics and variables for analysis involved with the game of baseball. Regardless of which league, division, or city you might watch a game, baseball plays by a set of predictable rules with room for surprises with every pitch and hit. Pitchers take the mound and throw for nine innings straight without anyone getting a hit to earn the elusive no-hitter distinction. Batters get walk-off homeruns and win games, or grand slams that move everyone on base to home plate. Baseball players show their creativity, their athleticism, and their field awareness with acrobatic catches and fast running to get the out, the score, and the advantage. Baseball players can be injured and find themselves unable to play for days, weeks, months, or an entire season. Some baseball players come back better than before, some move on to other opportunities, and some never make it back to the diamond at all. Fans who have played and watched the sport nearly all of their lives will find themselves surprised and awed by the combination of the game, the players, and the supporters that make it quintessentially “America’s Pastime.”

As with anything that involves strategy, baseball is also complicated. There are many rules that must be followed for a baseball game to start and end smoothly and definitively. A game of baseball never ends early. The game may be delayed due to weather, scheduling conflicts, or other unforeseen circumstances, but the game is always continued at a future time. It could be that the delay only takes a few minutes, or it could take several hours. In extreme circumstances, it may be best to delay the game until another day, even if that means that players (and fans) have to work harder to cram more baseball into that future day than was originally planned.

Baseball is reliable. This reliability is because of all of the rules associated with the game. At some point, after years of playing and watching baseball, we know these rules without ever having to consult any official rulebook. When we first started playing baseball, we learned the basic rules of the game: Someone throws the ball at home plate, we swing and try to hit the ball, and if we do, we run toward first base as fast as we can before whoever catches the ball can throw it to first base. Whoever makes it to the base first, us or the ball, determines whether we are safe or out. From that point on, the rules get infinitely more complicated as the variables of the game change.
Now imagine baseball is diabetes.

Diabetes is something that those of us who live with it do every single day. We monitor statistics, variables, and analyze data constantly, both consciously and subconsciously. Each type of diabetes has a set of predictable rules, with variations, and yet there is always room for surprises. Those of us on continuous glucose monitors try to stay within a designated blood glucose range, with no alarms for being high or low, to earn the diabetes version of the no-hitter. We are always making adjustments, trying new things, and going out of our way in an attempt to keep an advantage over the demands of living with diabetes. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose, and sometimes we get delayed, but we always keep playing.

Life is so very complicated. We have rules for everything to help us maintain order and make sense of the chaotic world around us. To live with diabetes in this world, we develop strategies that help us manage complications. Complications are a part of life, with or without diabetes. The idea behind the pieces that we have published in this issue of The PLAID Journal are to force us to get in the game, to think about complications, to talk about them, and to remove the taboo that a life complicated by diabetes has in the mainstream.

If we are going to talk about complications, I feel it is important to emphasize that this journal focuses on people living with diabetes, and sometimes that living includes things that the world would rather us not talk about. Instead of running away from the topic of complications, we run toward it, because we feel that everyone living with diabetes has valuable experiences to share. We do not perpetuate stereotypes or reinforce generalizations that associate living with diabetes with a loss of life, limb, or liberty. This focus on people living with diabetes, even when that living is complicated, helps us publish research articles that can make a positive difference in the lives of every person with every type of diabetes. Keeping people with diabetes at the core of our decision-making processes allows us to review research that can change lives for the better. By telling us your stories, and giving us the opportunity to share them with a broader audience, we can move forward together and benefit from each other’s perspectives.

I hope you enjoy the articles in this issue of The PLAID Journal. I hope they inspire you to think about your own diabetes, and release yourself from some of the blame that is often associated with diabetes-related complications. I hope you remember that things get complicated for all of us, whether we have diabetes or not. Diabetes is not the reason things are complicated. Diabetes is the reason we get to talk about complications. Let’s play ball.

--MARTIN

(P.S. – Go Red Sox!)