

A World Series to Remember?

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It's a moment burned into the minds of Red Sox and Yankee fans alike – sitting inches away from the television, fists clenched, tightness in the chest and the unbearable urge to look away...

It might have been that very moment in 2003 when the Yankee's Aaron Boone hit a game ending home run. Or it might have been that very moment in 2004, when Boston's Pokey Reese threw to first base for the last Yankee out, and the devastation of 2003 began to fade from the memories of so many Red Sox fans. Either way, a new study, published in [*Psychological Science*](#), a journal of the [Association for Psychological Science](#), says it is the games our teams win that we remember, not the games our teams lose.

Psychologists Carolyn Breslin and Martin Safer from the Catholic University of America, conducted an experiment with 1,563 baseball fans who all followed or attended the 2003 and 2004 American League Championship games between the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees.

Of these participants, 277 were asked to complete a questionnaire about playoff games at one of eight major league games in the summer of 2008. The remaining 1283 participants, were readers of the pro-Red Sox newsletter, *The Remy Report*, or visited one of seven Yankee or Red Sox websites between July and the end of September, 2008.

Prior to answering 2003 survey questions, participants were reminded that the Yankees won and prior to the 2004 survey questions, participants were reminded that the Red Sox won.

Unlike previous studies, where memories of negative events may have been unavoidably rehearsed, keeping them from fading, Breslin and Safer discovered the exact opposite. "Both Yankee and Red Sox fans remembered more details about their team winning," says Safer. These details included the location of the games, winning and losing pitchers, and even additional little details such as if the games had extra innings.

Safer added, "People seem to remember positive events, not necessarily because of the experience, but because it is rehearsed more – we think about and share the experience instead of dwelling on the negative."

The authors emphasized the importance of what happens after an event. When the Red Sox won in 2004, fans were bombarded with images of victory. There were parades, celebrations, and constant reminders of the winning team. Each time there is a reminder of the positive event, additional rehearsal ensues, which boosts memory for the positive event.

Breslin concludes, "What happens after the event, such as the social factors of telling friends about the game, or seeing reminders of your team's winning year on sports paraphernalia is important. These

things serve as memory cues and prompt rehearsal of the positive event.”

While it may not be the Red Sox and Yankee fans who are in agony with their eyes glued to the World Series games this year, baseball fans around the world have their fists clenched, waiting to find out if their team will create a memory that will last a lifetime.