

What I did on my summer vacation

One of my favorite things as a child in grade school was discovering what everyone did during the summer. My family never did anything too extraordinary. We took the occasional road trip in the family station wagon. My brothers and I would fight for the very back of the wagon so we could coax truck drivers to honk their horn as they drove by.

Well, even though I haven't been in grade school in more than 20 years, I thought that, as a sports fan, you still might find what I did this summer of interest.

THE SUMMER BEGINS

My summer vacation began in San Diego. If I had to leave Chicago, I would make this southern California city my new home. This particular weekend, though, the PGA was in town.

The U.S. Open was being played, and I had gone to watch Tiger Woods in person. As you may recall at the end of a historic week, the tournament wasn't over. The 158th ranked player in the world forced Woods to sink a 12-foot putt to continue play into the following week. That's right, it was the ultimate underdog against the greatest player ever in an 18-hole playoff. Well, I had to rearrange my travel plans and accommodations.

It was worth it as Woods won yet another major championship and this time did it on one leg. His knee was so bad that it required season-ending surgery. It was one of the greatest individual efforts I have ever witnessed.

CROSS-TOWN CLASSIC

When I returned to Chicago, I had a three-day trip to Wrigley Field. My Cubs were hosting the cross-town rival White Sox.

It was a Friday in June, and the game was tense. White Sox starter John Danks had pitched brilliantly, holding the Cubs to only one run in six innings. White Sox General Manager Ozzie Guillen did the smart thing and went to his bullpen for reliever Octavio Dotel, who was having a terrific season. In the seventh inning, Cubs sluggers Aramis Ramirez and Derrek Lee hit back-to-back homeruns to tie the game. In the ninth inning, Ramirez hit his second homerun off of Scott Linebrink to give the Cubs the victory and sweep the series.

The Cubs outscored their South Side opponents 22-to-11, which made

ONE on ONE

with **Matt Abbatacola**
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The Score



it fun to go back to work on Monday.

The very next weekend, I was off to U.S. Cellular Field to watch the Cubs play the White Sox once again. I was feeling great and full of confidence for my team. Unfortunately, the White Sox returned the favor from the previous week by sweeping the boys in blue during the weekend battle. The White Sox pitching staff held Cubs hitters to nine runs over three days.

The summer's next road trip came at the end of July and took me to Milwaukee. I had a four-game series to watch. This time, the Brewers were hosting the Cubs. The Cubs led Milwaukee by just one game going into the series. I was nervous, and the Brewers were playing great baseball. They had new pitcher C.C. Sabathia and veteran ace Ben Sheets, pitching in games one and two.

As I drove home following the series, I re-lived every moment of the Cubs' FOUR-GAME ROAD SWEEP of their divisional rival! My team pitched great, played unreal defense, and hit the ball when needed. The Brewers crumbled under the pressure.

The Cubs began August with a five-game lead in the division and sent a message to the rest of the National League that the World Series will be going through Chicago this year.

BEARS IN BOURBONNAIS

With dreamy images of October, I was off to Bourbonnais, the home of the Chicago Bears' training camp. Looking back, I wish I had skipped this scheduled trip. Don't get me wrong, the drive there is pleasant, and the nightlife is fun for a little town. It was just the football portion of the trip I could have done without.

I really want the Bears to do well. I'll never forget as a 13-year-old boy when I screamed and cheered for the

Monsters of the Midway as they destroyed the New England Patriots, not caring or even realizing I was so sick with the flu. I would love to experience that same joy as an adult. But it won't happen this year.

Bears Head Coach Lovie Smith finally chose Kyle Orton as his starting quarterback. But it was really a choice of lesser evils. Orton will be the Bears quarterback until the Bears' offense sputters, probably in the first quarter against Indianapolis in the opener. Then it will likely be quarterback by committee or whoever has the "hot" hand.

The top four wide receivers on the roster are Rashied Davis, Devin Hester, Marty Booker and Brandon Lloyd. Not impressed? You shouldn't be.

I told you back in May that Matt Forte would be the starting running back. I just didn't realize it would be because Cedric Benson, the Bears' first round pick and number four overall, would be released by the organization after a summer filled with arrests and legal trouble. I just thought Forte would be a better football player.

Did I mention that this year's first round draft pick, Chris Williams — the left tackle from Vanderbilt — had back surgery and will be out until at least November? No? Oh, well. He should get right back into action, though, since he did practice two whole times before the surgery.

SWIMMING TO BEIJING

My last trip of the summer took me to Beijing. And you know why I had to witness the summer games in person. It was, of course, for U.S. women's beach volleyball. Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh hadn't lost a single set in an entire year leading up to the games. They were one of the biggest reasons to keep an eye on the competition.

Though while I was in Beijing, this other American athlete kept taking the spotlight off the beach. His name — Michael Phelps. The swimmer won eight gold medals in China, the most ever in a single Olympics.

Though Phelps' feat is impressive, I just wasn't all that excited. I guess swimming doesn't do it for me. There's something about a sport where a world record is broken in nearly every race that raises questions about performance-enhancement in my mind.

I'm sorry swimming fans, but you can have Michael Phelps and his records. For me, bring on Misty and Kerri.

Chicago Sports Schedules*

*SEPTEMBER HOME GAMES ONLY

CUBS BASEBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Sept 1	Houston Astros	3:05
Sept 2	Houston Astros	7:05
Sept 3	Houston Astros	7:05
Sept 16	Milwaukee Brewers	7:05
Sept 17	Milwaukee Brewers	7:05
Sept 18	Milwaukee Brewers	1:20
Sept 19	St. Louis Cardinals	1:20
Sept 20	St. Louis Cardinals	12:05
Sept 21	St. Louis Cardinals	1:20

WHITE SOX BASEBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Sept 5	Los Angeles Angels	7:11
Sept 6	Los Angeles Angels	6:05
Sept 7	Los Angeles Angels	1:10
Sept 8	Toronto Blue Jays	7:11
Sept 9	Toronto Blue Jays	7:11
Sept 10	Toronto Blue Jays	7:11
Sept 11	Toronto Blue Jays	7:11
Sept 12	Detroit Tigers	6:05
Sept 13	Detroit Tigers	6:05
Sept 14	Detroit Tigers	1:10
Sept 26	Cleveland Indians	7:11
Sept 27	Cleveland Indians	6:05
Sept 28	Cleveland Indians	1:10

BEARS FOOTBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Sept 21	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	Noon
Sept 28	Philadelphia Eagles	7:15
Oct 19	Minnesota Vikings	Noon



CHICAGO FIRE

FIRE SOCCER

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Sept 6	New York Red Bulls	7:30
Sept 21	FC Dallas	2:00
Sept 25	Los Angeles Galaxy	8:00
Oct 12	Columbus Crew	7:30
Oct 23	New York Red Bulls	8:00

SKY WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Sept 4	Seattle Storm	7:00
Sept 9	Washington Mystics	7:00
Sept 12	New York Liberty	7:30
Sept 14	Houston Comets	3:00