

Monday Meter

letters@TimesRecord.Com

03/24/2008

THUMBS UP — The boys of ... sumo?

Like Easter, Opening Day of the Major League Baseball season comes early this year. The Boston Red Sox and Oakland Athletics will play the first games that count on Tuesday and Wednesday in Tokyo, Japan.

After the long, harsh winter of 2007-08, Easter and Opening Day provide welcome portents of spring. They refocus our attention on hope, rebirth and the comforting rhythm of nature's seasonal cycle. Granted, the 6:05 a.m. local start times and the fact that America's Pastime is launching its season in a land on the other side of the International Date Line syncopates that rhythm. But it in no way diminishes the joy and hope that sprout like crocuses each year when the first cry of "Play Ball" reverberates across the diamond. It won't matter that the umpire will be making his first call in the Empire of the Rising Sun this year.

The fact that the world champion Red Sox will start defending their title Tuesday simply adds to the joy for local baseball fans. Boston's success further affirms the notion that the spring hopes shared by fans of all teams — even those with storied histories of futility — can be rewarded by season's end.

THUMBS DOWN — A pusher's push poll

Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, urged Mainers to ignore the fact that tobacco giant Philip Morris paid for a poll released last week to underscore the business community's opposition to tax increases.

We shouldn't. No matter how much smoke its representatives blow, Philip Morris can't shroud its long and sordid history of manipulating public opinion in a cloud of simplistic, self-serving push-poll questions.

Of course, a majority of Mainers would rather not see taxes raised. Undoubtedly, most would like cheaper gas, fresher milk and warmer weather. Polling on such matters does little to advance public discourse on the genuine problems that government, business and residents must resolve.

A fairer poll might have asked Mainers if cigarette taxes should be indexed to the damage they inflict upon public health — or if respondents are happy about the fact that residential property taxes remain high in part as a result of tax-increment financing and other business tax breaks.

Connors should be ashamed for aligning with these purveyors of misinformation and ill health.

THUMBS UP — Labor and panes

"Taking Panes," an exhibit showing what local artists made of windows removed from the historic Ames Mill in Richmond, runs through March 31. It's worth the trip, both to see the artwork and the venue.

The free show offers an eclectic mix of artistic media displayed in a naturally lit room with views of the Kennebec River and Swan Island. Burnished by decades of hard work, the mill's third-floor display area merges labor and artistry, creativity and hard work. It's a fitting symbol for Richmond's emerging arts community, further evidence of which can be at two relatively new galleries around the corner on Main Street.