



Michael Sneed.

A BALL THAT WILL GET YOUR GOAT

Is the end of the 67-year-old Cubs curse at hand?

If **Grant DePorter**, the man who detonated the Bartman Ball in 2004 in hopes of dispersing the curse, has his way — it will be.

◆ To wit: DePorter, the restaurateur/showman who blew the dreaded Bartman Ball to smithereens in an unsuccessful attempt to end the Cubs curse, now has another notorious Cubs ball in his crosshairs: the one used in the last out of the 1945 World Series, when the Cubs lost to the Detroit Tigers.

◆ Translation: It's called the "Last Out Ball," and DePorter, who bought the legendary Bartman Ball at auction for \$113,824.16, purchased his latest stitched sphere at auction last week for \$8,962.50.

◆ The rationale: "I wanted to do something to help change the Cubs' momentum," DePorter tells Sneed. "Cubs fans feel the 1945 World Series was the pivotal moment in Cubs history. Maybe by controlling the 'Last Out Ball' we can change the Cubs' luck and end their 103-year World Series Championship drought."

◆ Backstory: The last time the Cubs made it to the World Series was 1945. It was the series that gave birth to the legend of the Billy Goat Curse when a hex was placed on the Cubs by Billy Goat Tavern owner William Sianis, who was furious when his goat was denied entry to Wrigley Field.

◆ The Plan: DePorter tells Sneed he won't explode this ball, but has a plan "to trap its bad energy in a specially designed box akin to the one used in the movie 'Ghostbusters,' which housed evil spirits."

◆ The summons: The "Last Out Ball" will be placed in DePorter's creative hands in about two weeks, when Hollywood special effects master Michael Lantieri, who's currently shooting a flick in New Orleans with **Arnold Schwarzenegger** and **Sylvester Stallone**, will be summoned to design the box.

DePorter's plan is elaborate and full of bal-

lyhoo. Legendary White Sox owner Bill Veeck would be in awe:

1) The ball will undergo a CAT Scan to see if anything was done to it by the Detroit Tigers.

2) It will then go on display at Harry Caray's on Kinzie before heading to the Cubs game on June 13 for a last look at Wrigley Field when the Tigers take the field.

3) The Goat scenario: Later, DePorter will take the ball to visit the Billy Goat Tavern so William Sianis' nephew, Sam Sianis, who now owns the tavern, can see the ball — along with "Billy," a relative of the original goat.

4) The Goat logic: Since the goat never got to see this ball, DePorter figures if the goat finally gets to see the ornery orb — the goat's curse will finally be broken!

5) The last supper: Then the ball will spend the night in the same hotel suite the Bartman Ball stayed in at the Amalfi hotel, where it will eat the same last meal: steak, lobster and a bottle of Budweiser, catered by Harry Caray's. (Just to refresh your memory, many fans still blame the Cubs tanking in 2003 on fan Steve

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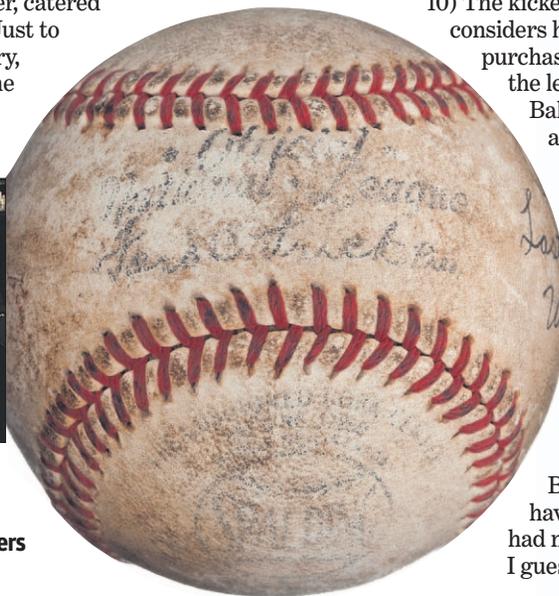
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Grant DePorter purchased the ball used in the last out of the 1945 Cubs-Tigers World Series.



Bartman's interference with a foul ball during the National League Championship Series at Wrigley Field.)

6) The takedown: From there, the ball will be moved to "Death Row," where it will spend a week in the same destruction chamber created to destroy the Bartman Ball.

7) The antimatter matter: "After the ball's time on Death Row, it will be moved into a special containment box similar to the container that housed the antimatter in the movie "Angels and Demons" starring **Tom Hanks**," said DePorter.

8) The You Gotta Be Kidding matter: Added DePorter: "This will allow the 'Last Out Ball' to be suspended for eternity or until the Cubs win the World Series — whatever comes first,"

9) The box will be located at the Chicago Sports Museum at Harry Caray's at Navy Pier, where it can spend time with the remains of the Bartman Ball, match.

10) The kicker: DePorter considers his "Last Out Ball" purchase a steal because the legendary "Buckner Ball," which perpetuated the curse of the Boston Red Sox, was up for sale in the same auction.

11) The squelch: "Hmmm," added DePorter. "The Buckner Ball sold last Friday for \$418,250. I wonder what the Bartman Ball would have been worth if we had not blown it up?" I guess we'll never know.

