

Investment Insights

For the love of the game

People ask me all the time why I continue to travel through relatively poverty-stricken nations. "How can that be fun?" they'll ask. The answers are plentiful, and always easy to discuss. My recent trip to the Dominican Republic was another perfect example of the pleasures that I encounter each and every time I set foot on the soil of a new-to-me nation.

We are so fortunate to live in a society of privilege – free medical, clean streets, low unemployment and high income. Taking time away for me is about learning another culture, language, and most importantly, people. We gripe about our taxes, how long it takes to get an MRI, how expensive fuel is... To put this into perspective, the gross domestic product of the Dominican Republic is approximately \$8600 per person. The country suffers from marked income inequality; the poorest **half** of the almost 10,000,000 population receives less than one-fifth of GDP (that's about \$3350 per person per year), while the richest 10% enjoys nearly 40% of GDP (around \$34,100 per person per year). Sure, there are no tax "problems", but that's because there is no income, quite literally.

We were fortunate enough to bring up one of my loves, baseball, to the right local; a fellow who couldn't believe that I, a female, knew how to play the game. We managed to get an invite to the weekly game at a field not too far from where we were staying – and not just to watch – to play! Our new friend, Genaro, picked us up at our hotel near 8pm for the Tuesday night double-header, which starts so late due to the heat and long working hours. Good thing we brought our gloves with us, as this nation of famous ball players like Sammy Sosa, Tony Fernandez and George Bell grow up sharing everything – even their modest equipment – with the opposing team. Nine players per team often mean a total of nine gloves to go around, leaving "your" glove at your position as you leave the field to bat.

It was, to say the least, 14 innings of ball that I will never forget: The late hour, the random middle-of-nowhere field that was almost perfectly kept, and me as their starting pitcher. Most of the locals had never seen a girl play before, and I'm proud to say that "Chica" pitched the first half of game 1 and left with an ERA of 0.0, and the win.

The simple pleasures in life are where it's at. There were plenty of laughs, even more smiles, and a general feeling of happiness that night. There was no mention of what these lovely people lack, no expectations from us as tourists, and certainly no feelings of fear or discomfort. We were, quite simply, teammates.

We've returned home and put together a crate of items to send to our new friends, including some gloves and bats that we no longer use, new balls, and an entire set of team jerseys and pants. I can only imagine how many people will use these items over the coming decades – perhaps even the next MLB all-star. What a pleasure it was!

- Jolene



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Please be advised...

Summer is only a month away – despite what this rainy weather is telling us! If you have extended vacation plans in the coming months, please be sure to let us know before you leave.

Did you know...

The 2011 RSP contribution limit has been increased to
\$22,450?

Teammates



What's new?

For those of you who have yet to have the chance to introduce yourselves to my new Associate, Zahra, I encourage you to do so! I know that Zahra has already had the opportunity to speak with many clients regarding tax forms, address changes, meeting bookings and trade processing. It's been invaluable for me to add someone of her experience and qualifications to my team, and I hope that over the coming months your interactions with her are as positive as mine are.

By now, your 2010 taxes will have been filed. On your notice of assessment, the CRA has now made notation of unused Tax Free Savings Account contribution room. Total TFSA contributions can now equal up to \$15,000 per person. If you have yet to take advantage of the TFSA, or want more information, please let us know!

The Generation Gap

Recently, I happen to have had similar conversations with a few different clients. The topic? Their children's ability to manage finances, and concern over what will happen to their inheritance. Although most of my clients have adult children, it seems that many of them have yet to put together any kind of real financial plan. I guess in some ways I can relate – I like to think I'm still young, I own a house, have a mortgage and other bills, and can understand how the thought of "saving" becomes a secondary goal to getting out of debt. After all, the cost of my modest rancher exceeded that of my parents' first house by a margin of about 30:1.

My "luck" comes in the form of education – I love what I do, and have totally bought in (literally and figuratively) to the value of monthly saving and a well-thought out retirement strategy. I've offered some assistance to these clients who have concerns over the thought of passing on their wealth to a less disciplined generation.

One of the most well received ideas is that of creating personal legacy documents. I've been calling this document an "Ethical Will" – in which parents can express their values, life lessons, and the impact they'd like to have on society. The feedback I've received is that not only are my clients grateful for the opportunity to put something personal together, but that the children appreciate having a meaningful document from their parents that complements the cold legalese of standard wills and trusts and introduces values and personal voice into the estate planning process. Although most parents don't discuss their "worth" with their children (nor do you need to), a document such as this is a great starting block to help engage in a conversation about real long-term wishes and goals for the family as a whole. It also gives many people the opportunity to discuss such things as executorships, family trusts and philanthropy.

Do you care if your grandkids reap the benefit of your hard-earned wealth, or do you not really care what happens to your assets down the road? Do your beneficiaries know your wishes? Many times the answers aren't clear to us, let alone them. If you'd like to engage in a conversation about finances with your kids, or if you think your adult children might benefit from financial or retirement planning, let me know. I'm happy to help.

Important Upcoming Dates

May 2011

8 – Mother's Day
23 – Victoria Day, Canadian Markets Closed
30 – Memorial Day, US Markets Closed
31 – Bank of Canada Interest Rate Announcement

June 2011

19 – Father's Day
21/22 – US Federal Reserve Announcement

July 2011

1 – Canada Day, Canadian Markets Closed
4 – Independence Day, US Markets Closed
19 – Bank of Canada Interest Rate Announcement

The Last Word

People ask me what I do in winter when there's no baseball. I'll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for spring.

- Rogers Hornsby

1896 - 1963

MLB All Star & World Series Champion

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