



BASEBALL THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE

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- Tommy T: Well, duh. More strikeouts, more immaculate...
- TheUmpire: Sounds like a fantastic day at the...
- jim sowash: I was present at that game as...
- TheUmpire: And Ferrano _still_ can't hit it!...
- TheUmpire: Agreed -- this seems like a problem...

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A Visit From Uncle Charlie

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(from *press release*)

Science has proven what baseball players have known for more than a hundred years, the **curveball** is more powerful than the brain.

At the fifth annual international Best Visual Illusion of the Year Contest, first place went to a mind-boggling entry called "**The Break of the Curveball.**" The entry challenges the human visual system and brain to predict the movement of a spinning disk.

The popular illusion contest is led by two visual neuroscientists at Barrow Neurological Institute at **St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center** in Phoenix, Arizona. Dr. Susana Martinez-Conde and Dr. Stephen Macknik launched the contest five years ago as part of their ongoing research into the human brain's relationship to visual perception.

"As scientists and medical researchers, we learn from these visual illusions every year. The knowledge that we will eventually get from studying the 'Curveball' illusion may be applied throughout our research and far beyond baseball," says Martinez-Conde, who heads the **Laboratory of Visual Neuroscience** at Barrow.

From the demonstration narrative:

In baseball, a curveball creates a physical effect and a perceptual puzzle. The physical effect (the curve) arises because the ball's rotation leads to a deflection in the ball's path. The perceptual puzzle arises because the deflection is actually gradual but is often perceived as an abrupt change in direction (the break). Our illusions suggest that the perceived "break" may be caused by the transition from the central visual system to the peripheral visual system. Like a curveball, the spinning disks in the illusions appear to abruptly change direction when an observer switches from **foveal** to peripheral viewing.

