

# “The Battle of San Francisco:” The Marichal-Roseboro Affair, August 1965

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During the 1965 major league season, pitcher Juan Marichal of the San Francisco Giants, and John Roseboro, catcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers engaged in a bloody fight while the Dodgers visited San Francisco’s Candlestick park in August that year. Beanball wars and vicious cat-calling tactics characterized the entire series and in the third game violence erupted when, in front of 45,000 fans and a live television audience, Marichal clubbed Roseboro over the head with a bat. The incident not only mirrored the animosity felt between the participants, but also characterized the instability of the period. Indeed, the Marichal-Roseboro clash was the upshot, in part, of a socio-political chemistry that affected the athletes and the larger American societal framework.

Only weeks before the “Battle of San Francisco,” riots took place near Roseboro’s home in a black community called Watts. Eleven days of fighting resulted in thirty-five casualties and millions of dollars worth of damage in that area. Turbulence, that year, was also felt in the Dominican Republic where a violent military coup left hundred dead and led to a United States military occupation of that country. These incidents touched the lives of both Marichal and Roseboro as they attempted to lead their respective clubs through one of the closest pennant races in the history of baseball. Finally, in addition to the general unrest, California’s regionalistic animosity, no less intense than that found in the New York boroughs where the teams in earlier years had engaged in classic battles, provided a backdrop to the heated Giants-Dodgers series that year.