



Now that the oppressive heat from this year's summer is finally giving way to autumn's cooler conditions, there are many things to be excited about. In many parts of the country, the rather dark and drab-looking green foliage of the forests has been replaced with an explosion of emotionally warming reds, oranges, and yellows. Beyond nature, another auspicious element of autumn is that tens of millions of kids are once again passing through least-common denominators, or Pythagoras's theorem, or differential equations, all on their journey of moving closer toward Fellowship in the Casualty Actuarial Society.

Not everything that comes with autumn is good, however. One unfortunate result of this time of year is that 28 of the 30 Major League Baseball stadiums now lie dormant—don't get me started on the sacrilege of hosting monster truck pulls and Justin Bieber concerts on the same ground where so many greats, such as Cecil Cooper, once played. Further, by the time you are reading this, it's likely that even these last two bastions of baseball will, too, have gone quiet.

While being left with only two teams still playing can be somewhat disheartening, the good news is that there is a greater focus on, and interest in, the best players on this year's best teams. This more intense focus by the fans and media has long been the case and, in fact, at one point resulted in the creation of the Mr. October moniker—and better yet, that delicious confectionary combination of peanuts dipped in caramel, all covered in chocolate, known as the

"Reggie" bar. To be sure, any player who hit three home runs in a single game in the pre-steroid era of baseball would have been famous for a couple of days, but to do so on three consecutive pitches, on the game's biggest stage in Game 6 of the 1977 World Series, resulted in Mr. October being born.

Since 1995, with the addition of the wild card team to the Major League playoffs, the World Series has at times extended into November, resulting in an



occasional discussion of who might become Mr. November. If this year's Series goes to seven games, the final three will be played in the eleventh month, and perhaps the sports media will have bestowed another nickname on this year's hero.

Even though there probably aren't as many media passes issued for covering the goings-on in the underwriting departments at PIAA member companies as there are for covering the champagne-soaked locker room celebrations of the winning team, the importance of this part of the season is critical to the success of those companies. With January 1st renewals right around the corner, the level of skill and expertise exhibited by the underwriting team will undoubtedly play a large role in how well PIAA member companies fare over the next 12 months. Decisions regarding what risks to reject, which ones to aggressively pursue, what coverage terms to offer, and what the account's

prior claims history means for the future are all part of the many important decisions made more frequently than ever during the busy 1/1 renewal season.

These types of issues are difficult enough to evaluate in a static environment, let alone one in which there are so many internal and external factors impacting the market, as there are in the current medical professional liability (MPL) arena. From the uncertainty surrounding healthcare reform, to the judicial challenges to the tort reforms passed several years ago, to the increased emphasis and scrutiny from the payers on patient safety and healthcare delivery quality metrics, there are myriad factors for the underwriters to consider in assessing each individual

account's MPL risk. Thus, while a very strong case can be made that the actuary has the most difficult role for MPL carriers, truth be told, it is quite possibly the underwriters who face the most daunting task on a daily basis. This is particularly true during the month of November, when the importance of these daily decisions gets magnified, in light of the concentration of January 1 renewals. And thus, it is in recognition of this fact that I believe the true Mr. November within the MPL world is everyone in the underwriting department at the PIAA member companies. †PIAA

Author's endnote: I intentionally use only the male salutation in the title of this column, even though there may be as many female as there are male underwriters at PIAA member companies.

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