

**2017 SABR Women in Baseball Scholarship recipient**  
**One Out for Pakistan, One Win for Women's Baseball**  
**By Sara Tobias**

I'll admit I wasn't thrilled when I learned that I would be pitching against Pakistan in the 2016 Women's Baseball World Cup. It didn't feel right to me that Team USA would be playing a newcomer to the World Cup, especially a country where baseball is not a dominant aspect of their culture, and cricket is the more widely played sport. What I would come to realize afterward is that being on a field with the women from Pakistan was one of the most humbling and influential experiences I've had playing baseball.

Pakistan recorded their first out ever playing against Korea, the host country for the World Cup. After catching a pop-fly in short right field, the fielders promptly came rushing in, celebrating like they had won the entire tournament. Jared Carrabis, a writer for the blog Barstool Sports, said on the subject, "Pakistan just pissed on everything that Korean women's baseball stands for. This isn't about sportsmanship, this is about pride, this is about respect, and this is about the almighty Women's Baseball World Cup championship trophy." Carrabis further explained how he thought Korea's pitcher, Kang Jung Hee, should hit the player who ignited the celebration next time she got up to bat<sup>1</sup>.

To the outside observer, like Carrabis, it may seem that Pakistan's celebration was unwarranted and unsportsmanlike, but that outside observer is likely thinking on a very general level of "baseball." What the general observer doesn't know is that, according to Natasha Raheel in *The Express Tribune*, "[The Pakistan Women's National Team was] advised not to take up baseball, but they took their chances, and in the end defied the tall odds stacked against them." That catch in right field was possibly the most important play to happen that September in Korea. Not because Pakistan won the game (they lost 10-0), but because it represents the spread of women's baseball internationally to countries where "people don't really give much credit to women"<sup>2</sup>. As much as I, and other women who play baseball, want to just be considered baseball players like our male teammates, it's important to remember that women's baseball has meaning, meaning beyond runs, outs, and hits. In a world that is getting more and more inclusive, accepting, and non-binary every day, many still regard women's baseball as some outlandish gimmick of a game. Those who take the time to look closely at the circumstances will find that Pakistan's participation in the World Cup rejuvenates the authenticity of baseball both in outreach and emotion.

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1     <sup>1</sup>Carrabis, Jared. "Pakistan Celebrated Like They Won the Women's Baseball World Cup After Recording the First Out of the Game." Barstool Sports. September 9, 2016. Accessed July 24, 2017.

2     <sup>2</sup>Raheel, Natasha. "Women making Pakistan proud courtesy baseball." The Express Tribune. March 08, 2017. Accessed July 24, 2017.

Madiha Ayub, the right fielder who made the catch, was not supported by her family to pursue baseball, or sports of any kind<sup>3</sup>. But she and fifteen other women went to Korea, leaving their jobs, families, and educations in Pakistan to pursue baseball at the international level. In preparation for the tournament, the team hired a coach from Taiwan who worked with them for a month before they headed to Korea<sup>4</sup>. So Carrabis is correct, this *is* about pride. But Ayub's catch and the surrounding celebration doesn't diminish the pride on Korea's side. In fact, the catch brings pride to all of women's baseball because it makes clear the intersectionality and international collectivity that women's baseball creates.

A commenter on Carrabis's post bluntly summarized the idea that Carrabis had danced around throughout the article by stating, "Women's sports: where routine plays become miracles"<sup>5</sup>. Ayub's catch was no miracle; it was the outcome of working tirelessly to achieve the team goal of competing internationally. And Pakistan's celebration was for much more than one out; it was for a group of female athletes representing a largely misogynistic country in a male-dominated sport, and having fun at the same time. If that doesn't deserve a celebration, I don't know what does.

There's a lot of talk nowadays about making baseball fun again. But there's nothing fun about beaming your opponent, as Carrabis suggested, or showing no emotion after making a groundbreaking play. The Pakistan women's baseball team showed the rest of us what fun and meaningful baseball looks like, and they were able to do it on the biggest stage for women's baseball.

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<sup>3</sup> Raheel, "Women making Pakistan proud courtesy baseball."

<sup>4</sup> "Women's Baseball Squad Leaves for World Cup in South Korea." DAWN.COM. September 02, 2016. Accessed July 24, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1281409>.

<sup>5</sup> Carrabis, "Pakistan Celebrated Like They Won the Women's Baseball World Cup After Recording the First Out of the Game."

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