Deb's Page

Catch This!

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Abstract

Athletically challenged prenatal educator and labor nurse finds birthing balls a rather cruel joke.

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DEB GAULDIN is a childbirth educator who performs songs and humorous tales ("Hormone Affirming Music and Humor for Women") about pregnancy, childbirth, and the adjustments to parenthood. She lives outside Chicago, Illinois.

Neither my husband nor I have any athletic ability, whatsoever. Our collective gene pool is somehow void of whatever it takes to dodge the ball, bat in the run, or even be chosen for the team. Perhaps admitting we met in the marching band is enough said.

I was raised in a family of sisters and mostly girl cousins. I thought an athletic cup was a trophy. My sister Dee was the one with a natural athletic ability. She and the neighborhood boys loved taunting me over my irrational fear of incoming balls. I would see a ball arcing toward me and tell myself, "It's just a ball," but I would behave as if it were a spherical kiss of death. My cowering and full-blown sweats were considered local entertainment.

So, what's the big deal? I wasn't planning on supporting a family as a professional athlete. I would simply avoid balls whenever possible and that would be that. Or so I thought. The universe had other plans.

Ask anyone who knows me, and that person will tell you that I am a walking magnet for flying objects. If there is a family in a park within miles of where I am picnicking, their Frisbee will make a beeline for me. Foul balls leap tall buildings in a single bound to make the same beeline. Why, even a disproportionately high number of people toss me their keys and say, "Here, take my car!" My palms get sweaty just thinking about it.

You may wonder how this relates to anything perinatal. It didn't . . . Until the introduction of—you guessed it—the dreaded "birthing ball." I know, I know. These things are harmless. They are soft and comforting, brightly colored, and so large that one can't possibly sneak up on me. But believe me, when I ask colleagues across the country how often their laboring couples think it's funny to throw the birthing ball at them, I should not be surprised that a disproportionately high number of expectant fathers make this bedside nurse their target!

Just goes to show you: You can run, but you can't always hide! I am thinking of trying one of those athletic cups for protection. Where do you put those things, anyway?