

Spring Flings

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Sarasota to Host BoSox?

By Dave Nemetz

According to stories in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* and *Boston Globe*, the possibility exists that the Boston Red Sox may be looking to Sarasota as a base of operations for Spring Training within the next few years.

The Sox, who currently train in Fort Myers, FL, have a lease there that expires in 2019, but they have an option to buy out the lease after 2009 spring training.

The Cincinnati Reds currently train in Sarasota, but they will be leaving Florida in 2010 for a new facility in Arizona that they will reportedly share with their in-state rival Cleveland Indians.

One of the ideas being floated is to create a mini replica of Fenway Park in Sarasota, and to build a complex on a 50-acre parcel in Sarasota to house players and other amenities.

The Sox previously trained in Sarasota from 1933 to 1958, with a break from 1942-45 for World War II. A decision was expected by the end of May.

Spring Training Memories

By Christopher Lee

The sun glistens on the morning grass. I hear the crack of the bat from the practice fields. It's March, a time when nothing else matters but spring training baseball. I've been fortunate enough to go to Arizona for spring training 14 out of the last 15 years, or for those SABR statisticians out there like me, about 63.6% of the springs I've been alive. Initially my family planned a Florida spring training trip to combine Disney World with a few spring ball games. When it came down to it though, Disney could wait. After all, baseball is America's pastime, not Mickey Mouse. Ultimately, we elected for a road trip to Arizona, a trip we absolutely loved. Considering we are an Angels family living just 500 miles from Tempe Diablo Stadium, it was a natural to make the trip a yearly tradition. At fourteen trips and counting, our annual trek to Arizona continues to create some of the best memories imaginable.

"Hey kid, we need some seeds and gum down here!" yelled Larry Bowa, third base coach of the then Anaheim Angels (now known as the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim). It was Spring Training 1997. As an Angels' batboy for the day, the request from a person of Bowa's stature was enough to make a grown major league ball player scared, yet alone a young batboy. It was a road game at Tucson Electric Park, so I nervously walked down the left field line, and into the players' tunnel, the farthest I'd ever ventured inside a stadium. As I stood outside the clubhouse, nervously debating my approach into the locker room, the clubhouse manager walked out with the highly demanded sunflower seeds, sparing me from a memorable, yet intimidating trip deep into the Angels clubhouse.

Serving as a batboy was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I was fortunate enough to experience for a few games. Opposite Bowa on the dugout intensity line was George Hendricks, the Angels first

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base coach and my favorite "teammate" during my few days as a batboy. George joked around with me and went out of his way to make me feel welcome on the field. Just being in the major league dugout was the highlight of that year's trip, topped off by a cherished bonus of keeping a bat broken by Tim Salmon. He signed it for me the next day, and I have prominently displayed that bat in my house for over 10 years.

Until I was a batboy, my particularly large head (I wear now a 7 7/8 hat) never presented much of a problem. The typical batboy helmets didn't fit me, so the clubhouse manager went back into the locker room and rummaged through all of the players gear. Turns out that player's heads aren't all that big. The best option available was the catcher's helmet worn by none other than Todd Greene (I once saw him hit a foul ball out of Angel Stadium). Unfortunately, when Todd Greene's helmet wasn't available (because he was catching), I was forced to smash my head into whatever helmet was available. By the end of the game, I left with an excruciating headache, but a pain I'd gladly take for the experiences I had as a batboy.

Aside from being a batboy, another vivid memory occurred on yet another warm and wonderful spring training game day when an Angels win, hot dogs, and a highly successful end of the season autograph

session ended with a trip to the emergency room. Thanks to a celebratory dance up the bleachers after getting a treasured Jeff Mathis autograph, I ended up with a divot in my leg. Four hours and forty stitches later I walked out of the emergency room in Tempe. Despite its finish, I still consider that day a huge success. I still have my autograph from one of the Angels top prospects of the season, one who is now playing for the major league team.

While Jeff Mathis was definitely the most painful autograph, there were many other memorable autograph moments in Arizona. Much like a player remembers their first hit, a baseball fan remembers their first autograph. Damion Easley was my first spring training autograph back in March 1992. I still remember eagerly watching the Angels complete a lengthy running exercise after the game. As the drills concluded, my heart raced as Easley slowly approached the stands. I could barely speak but still managed, with my mom's help, to ask "Mr. Easley" for his autograph. Easley graciously provided it, marking yet another highlight of my young sports life and a memory that Easley, the career .252 hitter, likely forgot long ago.

While all of my baseball related memories are great, the most memorable aspect of spring training is family. I remember playing catch with my dad in the parking lot after Cubs games at Mesa, my mom showing me how to ask baseball players for autographs in the outfield corner in Peoria, and my sister being a great companion to watch the game with while enjoying hot dogs and soda at Tempe Diablo Stadium. Thinking about March naturally conjures up just two words: "baseball" and "family". It is a tradition our family has kept for many years, and one that I intend to continue for many years to come.

I measure my spring training memories in a qualitative fashion, but for those of you keeping score at home: 15 years. 14 spring trainings. 10 stadiums. 100's of autographs and pieces of memorabilia. 40 stitches. 5 games as an Angels batboy. 100's of players with numbers in the 90's. 1000's of pictures with family. A lifetime full of memories.....courtesy of spring training.

Marana a New Destination in Arizona?

Rockies, Diamondbacks interested in Tucson suburb

By Dave Nemetz

According to the *Arizona Daily Star*, the Colorado Rockies have met with officials of the Arizona town of Marana, a northwest suburb of Tucson, about the viability of a complex to house the Rockies spring training and minor-league facilities, should the Rockies plans to remodel Hi Corbett Field fall apart.

Funding for the project would be subject to voters ratifying a bill allowing a half-cent tax on amusement-related expenditures. The bill must first be passed by the Arizona legislature.

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Hi Corbett Field, an aging stadium in the city of Tucson, needs approximately \$20 million worth of improvements, according to the Rockies. The funding derived from an amusement tax could be used to either renovate or rebuild Hi Corbett Field or build a new facility in Pima County.

Pima County Sports and tourism Authority treasurer David Cohen said that if a new stadium were built, the occupant(s) would most likely be forced to sign a long term agreement to stay in the facility, possibly as long as 15 years.

Also, according to www.springtrainingonline.com, the Arizona Diamondbacks would also be interested in a new facility with the impending departure of the Chicago White Sox from Tucson.

MLB Spring Training Attendance Record Set

From mlb.com

Major League Baseball drew a record total of 3,692,125 fans to Spring Training games in 2008, breaking last year's high of 3,421,055, it was announced today. This marks the third time in the last four years that MLB's record for overall Spring Training attendance has been set. Prior to 2005, the record for Spring Training attendance was 3,330,200 fans in 1994.

The average Spring Training attendance in 2008 was 8,026 per game, surpassing the previous mark for highest average attendance, set in 1994 (7,709 per game).

Do You Have an Idea for "Spring Flings"?

We're always looking for committee members to submit articles for upcoming issues of Spring Flings. If you have an idea, submit your article by November 24, 2008 for inclusion in the December 2008 edition. Send an e-mail with your article to Newsletter Editor Dave Nemetz, davenemetz@smartneighborhood.net.

Notes From the Chair

Kevin Saldana

Last September, the committee's headquarters moved from California to the Cactus League as I moved my family to Gilbert, AZ in the East Valley of Phoenix. I do not expect this move to help with the Spring Training Sites project as I have the Arizona section completed.

I would like to thank Bill Mehr of Fredericksburg, VA for his help in completing the Richmond, Virginia section of the database. Most of the work that is left is before 1949. I do have a few areas that need to be closed out for the period of time since 1949.

With a committee of this size, I do not have the opportunity to get much one on one time with committee members. What I need at this point in time is feedback from each committee member, especially those who have joined the committee recently, please let me know what areas you hope to contribute to the committee and what you hope to learn by being on the committee.

Thanks for all the hard work of each committee member,

Kevin

SABR 39 Spring Training Research Committee Meeting

Are you a Spring Training Committee member planning on attending SABR 39 in St. Louis in June?

The committee's annual meeting is slated for Thursday, June 26, at 9:00 AM, and should last approximately 1 hour.

Annual Report

The Spring Training Committee has enjoyed significant growth over the course of the last year. We currently stand at 180 members. At the moment, we are concentrating on one project in particular, that being our Spring Training Sites project. We do have a few other projects on the back burner. We do not anticipate the need for any funds from the SABR office in the coming year.

From the Discussion Group Site:

Topic: DH/No DH?
Posted on April 2, 2008

Last week, the Tigers and Pirates played a game in Bradenton, making it a Pittsburgh home game. The Pirates did not use the designated hitter, but allowed the Tigers to use a DH. How common has this been?

Mark Pattison 4/2/08

The whole thing is ridiculous! Either the National League should adopt the designated hitter, or the whole idea should be tossed in the garbage. I don't know how common the situation you describe has been, but to my mind it leads to nothing but confusion. Imagine! Each major league having different rules. It makes no sense.

Zita Carno 4/2/08

In spring training games, the DH rule can be used by ANY team, in ANY team's home ballpark, by prior agreement of the teams. Usually, it's done by NL teams at home (or at other NL parks) who want to get players extra at-bats.

The Cubs and Brewers played a game at Ho Ho Kam Park in Mesa on March 27 in which BOTH teams used the DH. The reason for this was that the game, the final Arizona game for both teams this year, was pitched by minor league pitchers and both teams figured they'd get extra AB for a major league hitter rather than give AB to minor league pitchers.

Al Yellon 4/3/08

About the Spring Training Committee

The Spring Training Committee was formed in 2002 to study the impact of professional baseball on the cities which have played host to spring training camps over the course of baseball history. The primary area of research is a comprehensive historical and geographical listing of spring training venues for major league, minor league and Negro league ball clubs. Committee members have also compiled a listing of those ballplayers who have appeared on spring training rosters for big league clubs, yet never made their debut in regulation championship play.

The committee publishes the *Spring Flings* newsletter twice annually.

The committee operates an interactive online discussion group (<http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/sabrspring/>) for members to post research requests, analysis and other items of interest.

Any SABR member can join this committee.

For more information, please feel free to follow-up with me directly.

Kevin Saldana, Chairman
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