

Cook & Son Bats' Blog

Todd, Tim and Kellan Cook love Baseball, the Seattle Mariners and trekking around the country to visit stadiums and watch games. These are their stories.

Ryan Rowland-Smith, C&S Hall of Fame (2010)

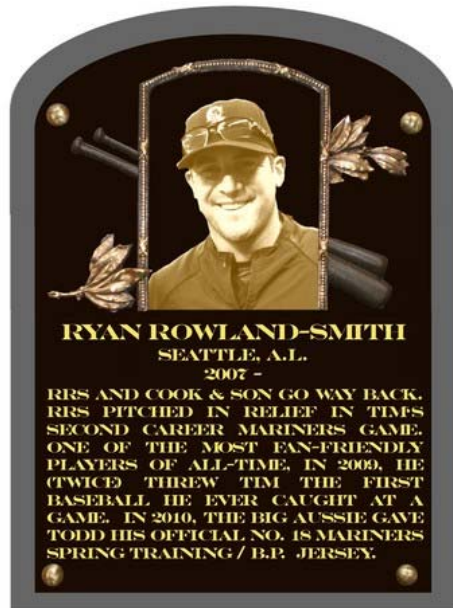
Last season, I created the Cook & Son Hall of Fame and inducted Mariners bullpen catcher and former big leaguer Jason Phillips as the first member as a way to honor and say thank you to Phillips for being so incredibly nice to me and Tim and making the 2009 season extra special.

In May, I mentioned in a entry about our first Mariners game of the season (and our last game ever seeing Griffey play) that I we had an amazing interaction with Mariners pitcher Ryan Rowland-Smith, which followed an amazing interaction that we had with him last September in Toronto. Since that game in Baltimore, I have had plans to induct RRS as the second member of the C&S Hall of Fame, like Phillips based on his going above-and-beyond the call of duty in terms of fan friendliness.

But, in the meantime, my favorite player of all-time (and Tim's second favorite behind Ichiro), Ken Griffey, Jr. retired. I have known all along that I would induct Griffey into our little Hall of Fame as soon as he retired, as the first player to go into the C&S HOF based on his on-field achievements. So, with his sudden (and personally sad) retirement, Griff jumped RRS in order of induction.

But now it is RRS's turn.

Without further adieu, Tim and Todd Cook are happy to announce the induction of Ryan Rowland-Smith as the third member of the C&S Hall of Fame, and the second member inducted based on above-and-beyond the call of duty fan friendliness:



Let's recount the extreme coolness of Mr. Ryan Rowland-Smith.

Our first encounter with RRS came in August 2007 at Tim's second career Mariners game and first career road game. It took place at Baltimore's Camden Yards (at a time when they had no ice cream helmets!) and it was very brief. RRS pitched 1 innng in relief as the Mariners extended their record to 2-0 in Tim's two Mariners games.

In 2009, Tim hit his stride as a baseball fan. He was finally old enough and had enough energy to go to batting practice and still stay awake for an entire MLB game. By

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Cook & Son Bats

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September, we had collected a bunch of baseballs from BP, many tossed up to us by our beloved Mariners.

But there was one problem. All of the baseballs had either been tossed to me or handed to Tim. This made Tim feel downright childish (of course, he was only 3 years old). Late in the season, he started telling me that HE wanted to catch a baseball at game. My thought was that I could get Jason Phillips help us with Tim's request.

So we headed to Toronoto in late September 2009 with a goal of having Tim catch a baseball in his own glove, most likely thrown by Jason Phillips. But there was no BP! So when I ran into and chatted with Phillips before the game, Tim was off in the kids play area with his mom.

Tim and my wife joined me in the field level seats shortly thereafter and we hung out and watched a bunch of the Mariners pitchers warm up. Enter Mr. Ryan Rowland-Smith.

After playing catch with Garrett Olson, RRS set his glove down right by the foul line and headed over to the seats to sign some autographs. I could see that his warm up baseball was in his glove. When he got to us, I asked him if we could get our picture with him. He was extremely nice and was more than happy to pose for this picture:



While setting up that picture, I asked RRS if he would throw the ball in his glove to Tim. He agreed. Now, this next sentence I have re-written about 10 times and just can't properly convey the feel. But I was struck by RRS's tone and demeanor during this exchange. He conveyed the feeling that there never could be any doubt about my request, of course Tim had to have that baseball.

In the pictures below, RRS had just retrieved the ball from his glove and thrown it to Tim. But Tim dropped it! RRS picked it up and signed it and handed it back to Tim:

June 2010
 May 2010
 April 2010
 March 2010
 February 2010
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 December 2009
 November 2009
 October 2009
 September 2009
 August 2009
 July 2009
 June 2009
 May 2009
 April 2009

CATEGORIES

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 Citizens Bank Park
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RRS then went on signing. He was still standing right next to us when someone didn't have a pen. He asked if anyone had a sharpie. At the same time, Tim told me he was sad because he didn't catch the ball. I handed a pen to RRS and asked him if he would re-throw the ball to Tim so he could try to catch it again.

Of course, he would. He signed the girl's baseball and then grabbed Tim's baseball, walked all the way across the warning track, and tossed it to him again. And Tim caught it! It was a great moment made possible by one incredibly nice Aussie.

I should mention that at some point during these exchanges with RRS, I told him that it was excellent that he was No. 18 and I mentioned that I was No. 18 when I played baseball. In fact, I am still to this day No. 18 in my softball league.

He asked me why I liked 18. I didn't have a good answer. I just do. I think the genesis of it was that I just thought it was a cool looking number on the back of Darryl Strawberry's jersey back in the day. He didn't mention why he picked 18, but I later read on his ([now inactive](#)) [blog](#) that the M's just gave him the number and he thought it was cool because the best pitcher on a team in Japan is usually No. 18. I have no clue if that is true, but I do note that Diasuke Matsuzaka wears No. 18. (I just found this [blog entry](#) on this topic).

Anyway, lets fast forward to March 2010. Spring Training was in full swing. I was busy planning out our 2010 baseball season. One of the topics on my list was to figure out my 2010 game uniform. If you haven't noticed, I wore essentially the exact same thing to every game in 2009: green cargo shorts, button up M's jersey, M's official 2009 game undershirt, and white/blue M's hat). I was wondering if I should switch it up for 2010. I think I must have been watching an M's spring training game on MLBNetwork at the time with RRS pitching or maybe I was watching an internet video clip interview of RRS. Whatever I was watching, I got a [flat out ridiculous](#) idea.

In my defense, it was probably really late at night and I was probably really tired. But whatever the reason, I typed out the following letter to RRS:

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March 8, 2010

Dear Ryan:

Hey there, Hyphen18! I have a serious (yet possibly ridiculous) question for you. First, a little background might help.

My son, Tim, and I are huge Mariners fans. I grew up in Seattle. But, we live in Pennsylvania. In 2009, we saw the Mariners 15 times split between Safeco Field, Camden Yards, Yankee Stadium, Fenway Park, Progressive Field and Rogers Centre. I write about our father-son baseball adventures on MLBlogs at <http://cookandsonbats.mlblogs.com>.

Here we are with you in Toronto last September – you are the first (and only) player to ever throw a baseball to Tim at a game. You threw it to him twice and he was so excited to try to catch it. Thank you!



See that hat and jersey I'm wearing above? That was my 2009 "game uniform." I'm looking to switch it up for 2010 and I love the M's Spring Training jerseys. I was wondering if there is any chance I could have your practice jersey once you are finished with it? I wore No. 18 when I played baseball. I would be extremely honored to wear your *dinky-di* Mariners No. 18 jersey to all of our 2010 games.*

I know this is a long shot and I understand if the answer is no. But if this could somehow work out, I would be ecstatic. If you think this could work, you can contact me at the info above, or simply send me a comment on twitter (where I follow you), and I will send a self-addressed stamped envelope for mailing the jersey.

We are really looking forward to opening day and have high hopes for a strong season. Best of luck and I'll be looking for you this season at Safeco Field, Camden Yards, Yankee Stadium, Progressive Field and Petco Park.

Very truly yours,

Todd Cook

* *Aussie slang courtesy of <http://www.koalanet.com.au/australian-slang.html>.*

The next day, I went to package up the letter in an envelope and send it off to the Mariners spring training facility in Peoria, Arizona. A little embarrassed, I showed it to my wife and we agreed there was a essentially a 100% chance that I would never hear anything from RRS in response to the letter.

I mailed it off, didn't tell anyone else about it, and went on living life.

Eventually, we met up with the Mariners in Baltimore for the first time of the 2010 season. It was a damp May day with no BP. So we had a lot of time to kill before the game started. Tim was sitting on my shoulders as we stood in the CF seats just watching the activity around the ballpark.

Soon, RRS came walking from the dugout through CF. He was on his way to the bullpen:



I'd basically forgotten about the letter. Not really forgotten that I sent it, but figured it was a moot point and a done deal. I'd already noticed on TV that the Spring Training jerseys were also being used as the M's BP jerseys. So weeks earlier when I noticed that fact, I officially gave up any hope (not that I ever actually had any) of my letter bearing fruit.

I had just read on his twitter page (@hyphen18) that he'd buzzed his hair. He was about 100 feet away when I called out, "Hey, Ryan, let's see the new hair!" Without looking up, he laughed and took off his hat. Then he put his hat back on and looked up at us.

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Instantly...and I mean instantly (no hesitation whatsoever)...he pointed at us and exclaimed, "Oh, hey, man!"

He changed his course and started walking over to us:



As he stood below us...



...we shared (approximately) the following exchange:

RRS: You wrote me that letter (sizing up a sheet of paper with his fingers), right?

TODD: Yeah!

RRS: Sorry, I didn't get back to you. I didn't know how to get a hold of you.

[NOTE: If you are a professional baseball player, you should not feel obligated to apologize for not getting in touch with some random dude who asks (literally) for the shirt off of your back! Seriously, RRS is ridiculously nice!]

RRS: So, what's the deal? I mean, do you still want it?

TODD: ARE YOU SERIOUS!!!!? Of course, I do! Oh, my gosh. Are you serious!? I sent the letter but never thought there was any chance you would actually say yes! I mean the letter was ridiculous!

RRS: Oh, no. No problem, man.

[NOTE: This conversation had a very similar vibe to the "could you throw Tim that baseball" discussion. The vibe was almost like, "Hey, you asked for my jersey, of course I'm gonna give it to you. Why would you ever doubt it?"].

RRS: Okay. Well, where are you going to be?

TODD: (not really understanding the question) I don't know, here? Wherever you need me to be?

RRS: Will you be in Seattle at all?

TODD: Yeah, but not until the very end of the season. We're coming in for the last series of the season to be there in case Griff retires.

[NOTE: I really wanted to be at his final game, and this actually ended up being the last time we saw Griff play].

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RRS: Why don't we meet up there? I only have one of them. So I can't give it to you or I won't have one. But if we're in Seattle I can just get a new one.

TODD: Oh, yeah. I noticed they are your BP jerseys.

RRS: Yeah. So I need it for BP. But I can just get a new one if we're in Seattle.

We chatted a little more, but I can't really remember what exactly we said.

About half an hour later...



...we ran into each other in the infield and RRS posed for another picture with Tim and we chatted again briefly.

After this game, I was estatic. WOW! Ryan Rowland-Smith said he would give me his jersey! I mean, that's ridiculous. I couldn't wait! Ah, I wasn't going to be in Seattle until the end of the season!

I decided I should make this as easy as possible for RRS. Ideally, I wanted to get it straight from him at the ballpark. But that could be complicated. So I sent him another letter thanking him for being so incredibly nice and generous and awesome. I included a stamped return envelope (a big one) in case he just wanted to mail the jersey. I also gave him a list of all of the Mariners games we would be in attendance for over the rest of the season.

Within one week from mailing that letter, my wife called me at work to let me know that I got a big envelope with my own writing on it. I couldn't wait to get home that night!

Care to guess what was in that package? Yep, my new official Ryan Rowland-Smith AUTOGRAPHED spring training / batting practice jersey...



...AMAZING!

The jersey, by the way, is HUGE! Size 52! RRS is 6'3" and I am a mere 5'11". He needs a lot more fabric to cover his frame! If untucked, the jersey is like a dress on me.

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Here are some screen shots of RRS wearing the jersey during spring training 2010:



And here I am playing the role of RRS while pitching to Tim in our backyard:



I've had the jersey about a week and a half now and I still cannot believe it. Who has ever thought of writing to a professional baseball player and asking for his jersey? And who has ever heard of it ACTUALLY WORKING!?

By the way, the jersey has a few small scuffs on the bottom on one side. I think its cool that it shows some actual "wear-and-tear." When I opened it, my wife asked, "Is it all sweaty and dirty smelling?" The Answer: No. It was washed and (as my wife and I have referred to it) "Mariner fresh" smelling!

THANK YOU, RYAN ROWLAND-SMITH! (And not just for the jersey, but for being such a down-to-earth, genuine, nice guy). Best of luck to you for a long and successful career, hopefully all with the Mariners!

UPDATE:

In a C&S Hall of Fame first, Ryan Rowland-Smith has issued a brief (140 characters or less) induction acceptance speech via his twitter page:

"Thank you Cook and Son for my induction into their hall of fame! <http://alturl.com/753w> enjoy the jersey."

Why don't I just show you it? Here you go:



A very kind gesture, but all the thanks go to RRS. And a big congratulations for a strong outing yesterday — see the box score [here](#). Hopefully this outing (five innings, 4 hits and

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1 earned run) proves to be the first building block to a successful final four months of the season.

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Posted on June 4, 2010 at 8:43 am | [Permalink](#) | [7 Comments](#)

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7 Comments



Todd (and Tim, i assume your dad reads this too you)-
I've noticed your blog for awhile, but never really read every word. Mostly I would sit on the computer with my 2 1/2 (sept. 27) son Kendrick and look at your pictures. I'm glad that i'm getting all the details of your adventures now.
As you may be able to guess we are Angels fans. (Yes Kendrick is named after Angel 2B Howie Kendrick) I hope you keep reading this post despite our fan allegiances (ha ha). Living in Utah it's hard to get t many MLB games, but my wife is really understanding and lets our family vacation every year be to a MLB city. It helps that her dad lives in Orange County. We've gone to Angels games (3 total) and then went to Arizona last month. A trip to Minnesota is in the works. As for RRS I think that is AMAZING! I've always believed that if you can have a personal experience with MLB players, they very quickly jump towards the top of the "favorite player" list. And the fact that he shouted out to you on twitter is even better.
We decided to make our own adventure a week ago and caught a AAA baseball game in Salt Lake. It was great. Anyways, we can't wait for your next great adventure.
Your friends,
Phill and Kendrick Morgan (@pjmorgan11)

By [boblheader](#) on June 7, 2010 1:47 am - [Reply](#)

GREAT STORY. I am also a M's fan, but grew up a Dodger fan. I still have my autographed Steve Garvey ball that he hit me with during batting practice in San Diego. Several years later, I got him to autograph it. We used to go to the LA airport when the team would return to LA from road trips when Vin Sculley would always announce "the Dodgers will arrive in LA _____ hours after the last out", so off to the airport we would go. Most of the guys were great and very nice. There were a couple, who will remain nameless that would refuse to sign, but all in all, most were very pleasant.
These guys usually dont realize what an impact their courtesy has on fans. Glad to hear that RRS is such a nice guy. Figured he was, since he is so down-to-earth on his twitter.
Hope your son enjoys your stories for a long time to come!

By [olalladi@aol.com](#) on June 8, 2010 3:28 am - [Reply](#)



TODD-Making memories brotha, WOW..What a story. Blogg'n is best when you've got great stories to tell. Congrats to you both. Ryan R Smith you've set the bar so high now all the other pro-ballplayers are gonna get clotheslined. Good for you...D
<http://baseballsnotcher.mlblogs.com/>

By ["D" The Rockpile Ranter](#) on June 8, 2010 9:42 am - [Reply](#)



hopw he plows through for a nice career. if not theres no way you will forget his hospitality.
<http://pittpeas.mlblogs.com>

By [mattpeas](#) on June 8, 2010 3:33 pm - [Reply](#)

Awesome story man! That is almost unbelievable! All the way down to the twitter shout out, great start to finish. That really brings a new dimension to the enjoyment of the game of baseball! What a story you'll have for YEARS!
Brian
<http://txbaseballfan.mlblogs.com>

By [Txbaseballfan](#) on June 8, 2010 3:55 pm - [Reply](#)



Wow! That's better than any ttm that I have ever gotten (except for maybe Pete Rose) The next time you have a chance to get his autograph, you should get him to write HOF (Hall of Fame) 2010 under his signature. That would be pretty

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funny. Odd coincidence is that he signed a card for me in the mail during spring training. Maybe he wore that jersey. Nice story

HOWIE

<http://howie.mblogs.com/>

By *Howie* on June 8, 2010 7:09 pm - Reply



Wow — I'm way behind in my comment responses! Sorry.

PHIL & KENDRICK-

Thanks for finally leaving a comment. Glad you've enjoyed sharing in our adventures even if you just look at the pictures some times. That's no problem. Player interactions are very memorable. I have a number of them from my childhood — notably, Harold Reynolds used my glove for pre-game warmups once in 1991 — and they definitely stick with you. Hopefully Tim will remember some of what we're doing...if not, he can always read about it here...that's why I'm writing the blog, actually.

OLALLADI-

Thanks for sharing your story about Garvey. Very cool. Its always nice to get a ball autographed by player who hit/threw it to you. RRS is definitely down to earth. It really seems like he appreciates how lucky he is to play pro-baseball and doesn't take his situation for granted. That's probably why he has a good following from all over the world on Twitter.

D-

Thanks, man. Awesome line about setting the bar high and others getting clotheslined. Love it.

MATT-

I hope so too. He had a great start last weekend — 6 innings and zero runs.

Hopefully he can build on it.

BRIAN-

I agree on all account. Its awesome.

HOWIE-

Ah, man. That's a great idea! That would be hilarious and awesome. The bad part is that I JUST GOT HIS AUTOGRAPH LAST WEEKEND and I hadn't had a chance to see your comment yet because we were on the road. We'll see the M's next in August, maybe I can work the "HOF" signature then. Thanks for the idea.

By *cookandsonbats* on June 23, 2010 1:39 am - Reply

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