

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.

MyGameBalls.com Ballhawkfest 2011 (7/23/11)

Tim and I were in for a long day on Saturday, July 23, 2011. We are members of myGameBalls.com, and by the decree of founder Alan Schuster, this game was dubbed "Ballhawkfest 2011." While the battle between the Angels and Orioles was the primary focus of Ballhawkfest, there was a lot more going on than just the MLB game.

Tim and I left home at about 9:00 a.m. and we arrived at Carroll Park Field #2 for a friendly softball game at 11:00 a.m. Well, that was the original plan. But the 100+ degree weather scared off some of the would-be participants and we did not have enough for a full game. In fact, we only had 10 softball players. But that did not stop us from having a great time.

First, we divided up into two teams. My team included me, Alan Schuster, Mateo Fischer, Mike Rowles and the late arriving Ben "Wild Thing" Weil. Our opposition included Zack Hample, "Flava" Dave Stevenson, Oliver Rowles (Mike's son), Alex "Gold Glove" Kopp, and Garrett Meyer.

In the dugout, we had Jona (of Team Hample fame), Tim (who kept busy keeping score and hitting whiffle balls), and James (a documentarian who is filming a piece about Zack).

I have no clue how we decided the rules of the game, but it turned out to be a lot of fun and a very interesting format. We played seven innings of super-modified homerun derby. At the outset, Zack pitched to both teams. Once Ben arrived in the third inning, each team pitched to itself. Each inning, each batter got two outs – one hitting a softball and one hitting a baseball. All fielders played in the outfield. Any ball that landed in the outfield grass without being caught on the fly scored one run. Any baseball hit over the outfield fence scored five runs. Any swing that did not result in a run was an out.

It was hard to get pictures because we kept running in and out from the field to the dugout. But here is the best of what we got. First, Alan Schuster sized up a sweet Hample baseball pitch:



Interesting side note, for the baseball portion of the derby, we used Alan Schuster's entire MLB-snagged baseball collection.

Zack was a quality pitcher for our first two innings:

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Cook & Son Bats

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I was happy to take him yard twice.

The final score was high because homeruns counted for five runs each, but really it was difficult to score runs because everyone played stellar defense. Would you expect any less from this group? My unofficial Gold Glove award goes to Alex Kopp...



...pictured here in the red shorts. He patrolled left field like a pro. He was running all over the place and made a ton of great catches. He personally robbed me of several runs.

In the dugout, Jona was busy taking tons of pictures (by the end of the day (including the MLB game) she took over 900 photos)...

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...and Tim used a spray bottle of cold water to keep cool as he played.

It was harder to score with the softballs because they did not travel as far as the baseballs. Here is Mateo putting a good stroke on one of Ben's neon yellow softballs:



Special thanks to Jona for taking a couple shots of me at the bat. Here I am turning on an inside pitch from Benny Bang Bang and driving a homerun that stayed fair by about five feet:



This picture looks better than the last, but it resulted in only a one-run hit, not a homerun:

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The game was tight until the bottom of the fifth inning when we went off for 14 runs. The final score was...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R
Team #1	7	0	12	7	0	2	0			29
Team #2	8	5	9	0	14	8	X			44

1 - Zack, Alex, Oliver, Barrett, Dine
2 - Todd, Alan, Mateo, Mike

...44-29 good guys. Zack and I tied for the most homeruns with 4 each. Alan Schuster also had one bomb. Speaking of Alan, the game ended on a great play. Zack was the final batter in the top of the seventh. He hit a ball that was clearly going to land over the fence. But Alan calmly drifted back to the fence, leaned his entire upper body over the fence, and, with full extension, flat out robbed Zack of a homerun.

After the game, we set up our cameras on a flipped over garbage can and got some group photos. First at home plate:



From left to right: (Front) Jona, Flava Dave, Tim, me. (Back) Ben Weil, Zack Hample, Oliver Rowles, Alan Schuster, Garrett Meyer, Alex Kopp, Mateo Fischer, and Mike Rowles.

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I do not have a photo that goes with it, but I would be remiss if I failed to mention that Oliver made an amazing running grab on one of my swings. I hit a deep ball to RCF that I was sure was going to score one run. But Oliver ran...who knows, maybe 75 feet to his left and made the catch at a full gallop. Excellent catch, Oliver!

Back to the pictures, we turned around and got another group shot standing at the mound:



I should note that Ben threw on some official Cleveland Indians "Major League" give-away glasses to complete the "Wild Thing" Ricky Vaughn look. Nicely done, Ben!

Next, we all hopped in our cars and scooted across town to Di Pasquale's Italian Marketplace. Matt Hersl, who skipped out on softball/baseball, picked the restaurant and it was a good one. Tasty, tasty.

Tim requested a picture with the "chef"...



...and he posed with Alan and the Andrew Jones bobblehead that he won in the drawing Alan organized. That bobblehead now rests on a bookshelf in Tim's room.

Here is the best picture of our table at lunch:



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That's an official eating action shot!

Lunch wrapped up around 3:30 and people started to break up and head their own ways. The plan was to meet up again outside the CF gate on Eutaw Street. The gates would not open until 5:05 p.m., and I was absolutely dreading the idea of standing in the sun at the gates for an hour or more in the 100+ degree heat.

So we found a very favorable alternative. After parking in a garage on Eutaw Street, we headed to the Hilton on Pratt Street and found some empty couches in the lobby. Soon, Mateo wandered by and the three of us ended up chatting for almost an hour while gate opening times drew nearer.

Actually, it was primarily me and Mateo doing the chatting. Tim was spending most of his time monkeying around and spraying himself with his spray bottle:



We did not have tickets for the game yet. As we relaxed in the Hilton lobby, I exchanged a bunch of texts with our Baltimore ticket agent, Avi Miller. Avi arrived at the CF gate just about ten minutes before gate opening. When we got the text that he'd arrived at the ballpark, Tim, Mateo and I left the air conditioned Hilton lobby and headed to the blisteringly hot gate at the CF side of Eutaw Street.

Before the gates opened, we said our hellos to the myGameBalls.com guys whom we'd dined with just an hour or so ago. We posed for a bunch of group shots (but not with my camera...so see [here](#) and [here](#)) and then every headed toward LF as the gates opened.

Everyone, I should say, except us. We headed to the shady third base line where (among all of the Angels stretching in front of the dugout) we found former-Mariner Russell Bryan (no. 39):



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It is always good to see a former-Mariner, even if he's playing for one of our A.L. West rivals like the Angels. Actually, there is another former-Mariner (although one who was never an everyday player for the Mariners) in that picture, Adam Jones.

After a few minutes, we drifted down the line a bit toward the outfield. Right along the foul line, Osaka Japan's Koji Uehara (wearing tight running pants under his shorts in the 100+ degree weather) was chatting with Toyko Japan's Hisanori Takahashi:



Maybe they were discussing the "cultural fault lines" between their respective hometowns. Or maybe they were discussing the fact that Takahashi (April 2, 1975) is exactly one day older than Uehara (April 3, 1975). Whatever they were discussing, it did not prevent Koji from fielding a batted ball and walking over and handing it to Tim.

As Koji approached, I said "Hey, Koji, could we get a picture with you?" He said, "Yes." And then he handed the baseball to Tim, turned around and walked away. Hmm...I don't think he understood my request...I probably should have asked him in Japanese. Nevertheless...

Domo arigato, Koji-san!

A few minutes later, Russell Branyan finished playing catch with his partner and he flipped the baseball to Tim. Tim just watched the ball sail by his face and land in the empty seat next to him. But no one else was around, so we picked up the ball and no error was charged on the play.

As he tossed the baseball, I asked Russell if he could pose for a picture with Tim. Sure he could:



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After the photo but before heading back out onto the field, Russell reached out his humongous hand and gave Tim and I each a mighty hand shake. They don't call him Russell the Muscle for nothing. That dude is huge.

All of the myGameBalls.com ballhawks were going crazy out in LF chasing homeruns. Around this time, Avi came and visited us in foul territory so he could inform us that our prank of Zack Hample had been successful – for the complete story [click here](#).

While Avi was over chatting with us, someone sliced a foul ball about 10 rows behind us. It hit the seats and ricocheted right to Avi.

A few minutes later, Takahashi's interpreter and trainer Yoichi Terada (at least that is my assumption of who this guy is)...



...walked by and handed Tim a baseball. Terada had been playing catch with someone... maybe Takahashi...along with all of the other Angels pitchers playing catch along the LF foul line. When he finished, he picked up two baseballs (including the baseball he gave to Tim) that were sitting on the ground along the line. The two baseballs were *extras* that were brought out there in case someone lost their warm up ball. Those baseballs were never used, and the one that Terada handed to Tim looked like it was brand-spanking new.

Eventually, Tim asked to go check out the bullpens. We did, but no one was in either. So when we spotted Jona sitting in the shade in the first row above the cross aisle, we joined her for a little bit of sun relief. This is what it looked like:



And that is where we were standing when Dan Haren...

Follow



...unloaded a mega-toss-up over section 84 and directly into my glove for our fourth and final baseball of the day.

After BP ended, most of the myGameBalls.com'ers gathered toward the bottom of section 86. Most of the guys were there in hopes of snagging one of the 8 or so homeruns that had been hit into the Orioles bullpen. But we were just there to chat with the others, chew on some of the free ice the Orioles were providing in the concourse, and to spray Tim's spray bottle all over the place.

Our "Ballhawkfest" shirts had our names and the number of baseballs we had snagged in our lives (through the all-star break) on the back. Just for kicks, I got this picture of Tim and Zack showing off their numbers and they watched the empty field:



Not too shabby, Tim is (or was!) only 5,052 baseballs behind Zack.

Eventually, the Angels starting pitcher (and former-Mariner) Joel Piniero made his way out to CF to warm up:

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When Piniero moved to the bullpen, Tim and I headed up to the top of section 86 to watch Joel:



Well, I watched Joel. Tim spent most of his time squirting himself in the face:



With the game just about to start, a bunch of us met up in the LF corner for a group photo with the baseballs we had snagged during BP:

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Lets see...going clockwise: Zack had 5 at the time (including a special FeMeBe baseball from Jeremy Guthrie), Alex Kopp had 4, Garrett Meyer had 4, Flava Dave (who you can hardly see except for his arms) had 4, Jeremy Evans (who was a late arrival) had 1, Alan Schuster had 3 (his first 3 of the season), Oliver Rowles had 5, Tim and I had 4, Avi had 3, and Jona and Ben each had empty hands. FYI, those are not necessarily final totals.

Right before that group photo, the Orioles PA announcer informed us that the game time temperature was 102 degrees. We were hungry and hot. So Tim, Ben, Avi and his girlfriend Beverly, and I headed to the air conditioned club level. Avi and Beverly headed to section 258 to watch the game in person. But Tim and I grabbed a table in front of a big flat screen and ate dinner:



After a few minutes, Ben joined us. We had been out in the hot sun so long that we were in no rush to head outside and watch the game in person...the air conditioning and flat screen were a-okay for us. We stayed in there until the fourth inning! After eating, Tim entertained us with some extreme high pants...

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...and some fake DJ'ing on one of the nearby easy chairs:



While we were eating dinner, Ben and I discussed (among other things) the definition of a "ballhawk" and whether we qualified under that definition. Personally, I don't think of me and Tim as "ballhawks" because we don't go to games with the purpose of getting baseballs. We go to games because we love baseball and want to experience all that a Major League game has to offer. It just so happens that trying to get a baseball during BP is one of those experiences...and an important part of the game experience since I was a

Follow

little boy. But, when you compare us to the other participants in ballhawkfest, our *strategies* and *skills* are quite limited. Essentially, Tim and Kellan are cute kids (players like cute kids...most people do actually) and we know where to stand during BP. But, if that makes us *ballhawks* I suppose we can live with the title. Although, maybe a better title would be baseballhawks or ballparkhawks...or, simply, baseball fans.

Anyway, it was an interesting conversation, and it was a lot of fun chatting with Ben. We actually met Ben at U.S. Cellular Field back in 2009, and we had a lot of fun with him on that day too.

Before joining Avi and Beverly in the seats, Tim and I walked the club level to check out what it had to offer. Most of my pictures came out blurry (I guess because of the lighting) so I will just share this one of Tim and the Orioles Hall of Fame:



Here is what Camden Yards looks like from section 258 in the club level:



N.T.S. (You know it, not too shabby).

By the time we arrived in the seats, the Angels had already scored all of their runs for this game. In fact, all of the Angels runs came in the first inning on a 2-run homerun by Vernon Wells.

The Orioles got on the board in the bottom of the fourth inning courtesy of a solo shot by Adam Jones. Then, in the bottom of the fifth, the Orioles took a 3-2 lead on an RBI single by Nick Markakis and a sacrifice fly by Adam Jones. And that was all of the scoring in this game. While I was happy to see the Mariners division rival fall, it was sad that Piniero got tagged for the loss.

We sat in section 258 from the fourth through the seventh. Tim spent most of that time unloading 3 squirt bottles full of water on Avi:

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Avi laid down a rule that Tim could live with: No spraying Beverly, but Tim could spray Avi as much as he wanted. And Tim wanted to spray Avi a lot. In the eyes, in the ears, on his shirt, on his shorts, back of the head, shoulders, elbows, a direct shot to the mouth, Avi was an excellent Target, and Tim was a happy triggerman.

Between sprays, Tim did a little spinning happy dance:



Before the Angels removed him in the bottom of the sixth, I got this shot of Joel Piniero on the mound:

Follow



As I said, gotta love former-Mariners. Particularly, a former-Mariner who performed well and was a fan favorites while in Seattle. And that describes Piniero.

Our bright yellow "Ballhawkfest" t-shirts served their purpose perfectly; it was easy to spot the guys all around the stadium. Like here – we spotted Garrett Meyer sitting about half-way up the field level seats behind third base:



In the seventh, Tim and I decided to head down to the field level behind home plate. On our way out of the club level, I had a little bit better luck taking photos. This is the seating area where we ate dinner (at the empty table in the middle of the photo):

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Oversized autographed baseballs art:



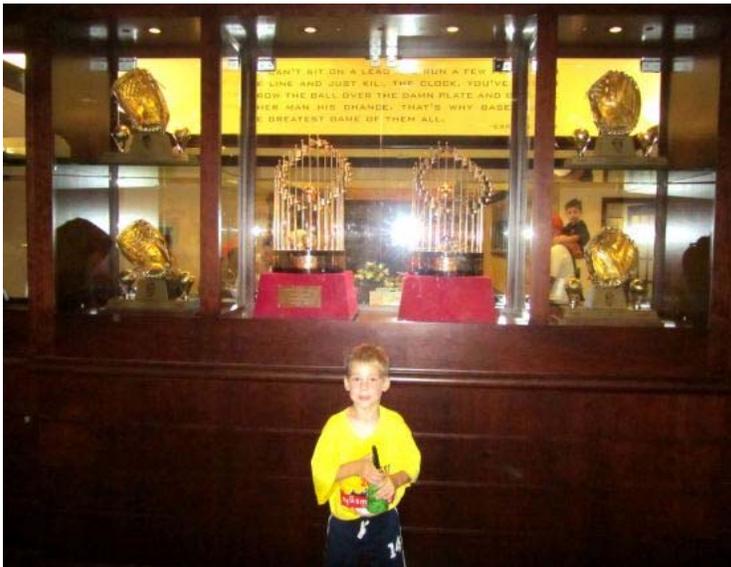
From left to right, that is Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson, Boog Powell (with the notation "MVP '70"), and Cal Ripken, Jr.

A busy bar:

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Orioles World Series trophies and four gold glove awards:



And six Orioles Cy Young Awards:



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When I was taking the picture of Tim and the World Series trophies, Avi was standing behind me chatting with Adam Jones' mom (and several other people). When Jonesys' mom walked by Tim she said something like, "Oh, honey, you should squirt me!" Tim was still holding his squirter, but he did not squirt her.

We ended up sitting with Jona (who deserves special thanks for being so cool and chatting so much with Tim throughout the day) for the last couple innings. She had been sitting in the last row on the aisle in section 32. Before joining Jona in the back row, Tim tested out a double seat setup:



The Angels were trying to come back, but Koji Uehara and Kevin Gregg were too much for them. Neither Bobby Abreau...



...nor Vernon Wells...



...could help the Angels. Both grounded out against Gregg in the ninth.

Toward the end of the game, Tim enjoyed a twist ice cream helmet to cap off a great day...

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...and after the game he used his water squirter to clean the ice cream residue from his dirty face.

After the game, the remaining Ballhawkfest participants met up again behind the third base dugout. We got our picture with Alan Schuster:



Then Garrett (who was visiting from Kansas City) requested a picture with Tim:



Follow

Of course, with two cameras going, Tim was looking at one camera while Garrett looked at the other. Doesn't it always happen that way?

Here is one of the coolest pictures of the day:



And one more featuring everyone's sweaty faces:



Once again that is (right to left): Jeremy Evans, Mateo Fischer, Zack Hample, Jona (she's only got one name like Ichiro), Alex Kopp, Tim (posing with one of Garrett's baseballs because ours were packed away in my backpack), Garrett Meyer, Oliver Rowles, Alan Schuster, and Benny "Bang Bang" Weil.

A great group of guys (and girl). Ballhawkfest 2011 was loads of fun and a smashing success.

2011 C&S Fan Stats

18/3 Games (Tim/Kellan)

16/5 Teams [Tim – Mariners, Orioles, Rangers, Brewers, Nationals, Phillies, Mets, Rays, Braves, Diamondbacks, Astros, Royals, Cubs, Angels, Indians, Reds, Giants and Tigers; Kellan – Mariners, Orioles, Angels, Mets and Indians]

13 Ice Cream Helmet(s) (Orioles (2), Nationals, Phillies (2), Rangers (2), Mets (1), Reds (1), Tigers (1))

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54 Baseballs (6 Mariners, 7 Rangers, 4 Orioles, 3 Umpires, 2 Nationals, 2 Brewers, 5 Phillies, 2 Mets, 1 Rays, 2 Braves, 2 Diamondbacks, 1 MLB Authenticator, 1 Easter Egg, 1 Glove Trick, 2 Royals, 2 Cubs, 5 Angels, 4 Indians, 1 Giants, 1 Tigers)

8/2 Stadiums [Tim – Camden Yards, Nationals Park, Citizens Bank Park, Minute Maid Park, Rangers Ballpark in Arlington, Citi Field, Great American Ball Park, Comerica Park; Kellan – Camden Yards, Citi Field]

13/9 Player Photos* [Tim – Felix Hernandez, Adam Moore, Garrett Olson, Chris Seddon, David Aarsdama, Michael Pineda, Miguel Olivo, Ryan Langerhans, Greg Zuan, Mark Lowe, Michael Saunders, Chad Durbin, Russell Branyan; Kellan – Luke French, Milton Bradley, Franklin Gutierrez, Justin Smoak, Matt Tuasosopo, Ryan Langerhans, Michael Saunders, Tony Sipp, Chad Durbin]

3/1 Management Photos* [Tim – Howard Lincoln, Jack Zduriencik, Eric Wedge; Kellan – Jack Zduriencik]

5 Autograph(s) (Michael Pineda, Michael Saunders, Mark Lowe, Felipe Paulino, Aroldis Chapman)

1 Bat* (Milton Bradley)

6/2 Mascot Photos* [Tim – Mariner Moose, Teddy Roosevelt, The O's Bird, Mr. Redlegs, Gapper, Slider; Kellan – Mariner Moose, The O's Bird]

1/0 Divisions Closed Out** [Tim – A.L. West (Safeco Field, Oakland Coliseum, Angel Stadium & Rangers Ballpark in Arlington); Kellan – N/A]

2 Line-up Cards (Royals vs. Rangers; Indians vs. Orioles)

*includes Spring Training**divisions where we have seen each team play a home game.

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5 Comments

It was so great meeting you guys! That was a great day at Camden Yards. I look forward to your visit to Kansas City next season. Keep up the good work on the blog, too!

By [Garrett Meyer](#) on August 5, 2011 5:01 am - [Reply](#)



GARRETT-

It was great meeting you too! As an added bonus, I have no fixed the spelling of your last name throughout this entry. I've seen some updates on mygameballs.com and it looks like you had a great NE trip.

By [Cook & Son Bats](#) on August 6, 2011 5:02 pm - [Reply](#)



I'm DEFINITELY stealing "NTS!!!" I love doing that to words haha. And nice picture with Avi. Great rule by him there. He didn't know what he was getting himself into!

By [mikeplazza](#) on August 14, 2011 8:33 pm - [Reply](#)



Oh, and of COURSE Avi would wind up talking to Adam Jones's mom haha

By [Ben](#) on August 14, 2011 8:36 pm - [Reply](#)



Whoa! Awesome entry. Sorry for commenting on it so late. I like the narrative and photos about Tim's every move, and I especially like the double-chair action near the end. Great seeing you guys, and hope to run into you again soon.

By [Zack Hample](#) on August 28, 2011 5:17 pm - [Reply](#)

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