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Kids Having a Blast Snagging With Dad

For Some, Ballhawking is a Family Experience

By Alan Schuster
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For kids lucky enough to get a ball at a Major League game, the experience trumps just about everything they've experienced in their young lives. On any given day, kids throughout the country show up at stadiums with their baseball gloves, hoping to bring home a piece of the game. For most of these young Ballhawks, their chances to get a ball depend on one thing -- having a Dad who knows how to snag.



The chance to be a snagging hero to their child is truly an exciting aspect of Fatherhood for myGameBalls Members Brian Powell and Todd Cook. For these Dads, teaming up with their son or daughter to go after balls is an experience unlike any others. "It is most definitely a family bonding experience," said Powell, a Ballhawk from Burseson, Texas. "Before ballhawking, I would take Sarah and we would enjoy ourselves and just watch the game, but snagging balls really changed the way we go to games altogether."

Cook, an avid Mariners fan who now lives in Pennsylvania, agrees. "For families, and particularly fathers and sons, I don't think there is a much better activity than baseball, at home, the local park or at an MLB stadium." Although Cook doesn't exactly consider himself a Ballhawk, helping his son Tim get a baseball is one of the most exciting aspects of a day at the park. "We do both love to try to come home from each game with a new ball in hand. Getting a ball gives you an extra special and unique memory of the game. It provides you a tie to a certain player or ball park...or even an umpire!"

Both Powell and Cook have fond memories of sharing in their child's first snagged baseball. Powell has recorded the experience on his blog, which has a detailed description along with some photos. "I had barely gotten Sarah's glove out of the bag and handed it to her when, WHACK!, a Cleveland player (wish I knew who) threw her a ball," he wrote. "Now, she's no Michael Young, so the ball bounced out of her glove and onto the stairs, but there was no one else around us so we got it."

Cook's first-ball experience was equally exhilarating. It occurred in Seattle in 2006, and Davis Romero provided the milestone baseball. "After we got to the first row (where we met up with my dad), someone hit a ball to Romero," Cook said. "He was probably 40 feet out into the OF. I yelled to him, 'Its my son's first game and can we get that ball!?' He immediately turned around and walked it over and set it in my glove. It was awesome."

The ball from Romero was the first in what may end up being a gigantic collection. Tim's passion for snagging has been apparent from the beginning. "For Tim, I think his favorite part is simply the baseballs," Cook said. "He loves baseballs. After we get a ball, he'll often proclaim to the crowd around us, 'We got a baseball!'"

Aside from getting to bring home a free souvenir, perhaps the most thrilling part of ballhawking for the kids is interacting with the players. Even when they don't give up the baseballs, just getting a smile and a nod from a player is an exciting experience. Both Powell and Cook have some great stories about special moments with players.

One of Powell's most memorable stories was an encounter that he and Sarah had with Blue Jays' player Scott Downs. Telling the story on his blog, he wrote, "So, when everyone else was yelling, 'Scott, Scott, hey pitch!', I told Sarah to wait until they stopped, then call out 'Mr. Downs'.

And she did, and when she called out, he responded with a playfully exasperated sounding "WHAT!!" He turned to face us, and I held up my glove and pointed to Sarah. Then, he proceeded to go through his pitch routine and threw the ball right in my glove."

Cook's most memorable player encounters revolve around his beloved Seattle Mariners. "In Boston earlier this season, Erik Bedard and Felix Hernandez warmed up in the OF and then Bedard threw us the ball," he said. "A couple minutes later, we got Felix to sign the ball and take a picture with us. Very cool!" Mariners' bullpen catcher and former Major Leaguer Jason Phillips is also a favorite of Cook's. In July, Phillips hooked up Cook and his son with 4 baseballs over the course of 4 days, including an autographed ball from the Yankee's bullpen. Cook's blog is filled with great pictures and details about the players they've had a chance to meet at the ballpark.

Fittingly, Cook and Powell have connected with each other through their blogs and enjoy sharing their ballhawking experiences with each other. "I follow Brian's blog and he follows mine," said Cook. "We've emailed a number of times and we have referred to ourselves as 'Team Powell' and 'Team Cook.' We both count our baseballs as a father-son or father-daughter team."

For the season, the current tally is Team Cook 18 and Team Powell 6. As Ballhawking continues to grow in popularity, perhaps many other Parent/Child teams will emerge in the myGameBalls community.

[Follow Brian Powell and his daughter Sarah on their blog.](#)

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