

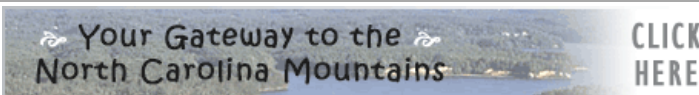


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Thursday, September 7, 2006



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During Stitch N' Pitch, It's Knit 1, Hurl 2

By JEFF HOUCK The Tampa Tribune

Published: Sep 7, 2006

TAMPA - Laura Bryant isn't much of a baseball fan; she'll watch the occasional game on TV, but she's not fluent enough to know what a "rally cap" is.

But she loves to knit.

So the owner of Prism Yarns in St. Petersburg is looking forward to the Stitch N' Pitch event Saturday night during the Tampa Bay Devil Rays' game against the Oakland Athletics.

Bryant will join hundreds of fellow fans of the needle arts in The Beach section of Tropicana Field as they knit, crochet, needlepoint, embroider and cross-stitch throughout the game.

What would she make if she had to knit something for a Tampa Bay Devil Rays player who might be beleaguered by the team's losing record?

"A really soft, plush, nylon kind of fake-fur blanket," she says. "When anyone feels the cold shoulder, they could snuggle under it."

The Stitch N' Pitch promotion at 15 ballparks nationwide is part of a program between Major League Baseball and The National NeedleArts Association. The inaugural event, during a Seattle Mariners game last year, drew 1,600 needle-crafters. More than 500 tickets have been sold for Saturday's game.

"Doing something like this on a national level opens up a lot more eyes to the crafts and what's going on in the needle arts," says Caroline Kerr, owner of Knit 'n Knibble on South Dale Mabry Highway in Tampa.

Devil Rays spokesman Rick Vaughn acknowledges that baseball and knitting aren't activities you would typically link.

"But an event like this helps us reach a segment of our fan base that might not necessarily be baseball fans and may not have been to Tropicana Field before," he says.

"Our feeling is once we get them out to a game and experience all that we have to offer, they will want to come back. We are all for creating fun experiences at the ballpark."

Or, as Jennifer Cole of the Yarn Gallery in Dunedin puts it, "What's better than knitting needles, a hot dog and a bottle of beer?"

To participate, call the Devil Rays' box office at (727) 825-3250 and ask for Stitch N' Pitch tickets. Each ticket is \$8. Game time is 7:15 p.m.

For information on Stitch N' Pitch, go online to www.stitchnpitch.com.

Reporter Jeff Houck can be reached at (813) 259-7324 and at jhouck@tampatrib.com.

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