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## News

# At the old ballgame

## Scalpers, security and, of course, the fans turn out for All-Star Game

*Wednesday, July 16, 2003*

**By Guy Tridgell, Mark J. Konkol and Chris Hack**  
*Staff writers*

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On a night when baseball put its best on display, not all the action was on the diamond.

Chicago and U.S. Cellular Field breathed baseball for one steamy evening.

The electricity could be felt in the concourses and in the streets, in the fans and in the ballpark workers.

The hum started hours before the first pitch, and continued when a squadron of fighter jets flew over a giant American flag that covered the outfield. It didn't end until another midsummer classic, an event born from idealistic dream in Chicago in 1933, ended with a 7-6 American League win.

### 'We have to go see it all'

The American League All-Stars stretched in short left field when the loudspeaker boomed, "The gates will open in 10 minutes."

By 4 o'clock Tuesday, the beer vendors were fully stocked and in position. Lead hot dog vendor Andrea Chuskas at the Dick Allen Rooftop Dogs stand had 300 hot dogs on the grill and the rotund Lemon Chill vendor rocked on his heels awaiting the first rush of fans.

When security guards finally stepped aside at Gate 3, Michealene Redemske of Frankfort and her dad, Joe Eichman of Blue Island, were the first to pass through the turnstiles in an early wave of mostly Chicago fans rushing to watch batting practice.

"We were here for the All-Star Game in 1983, and it's exciting to be back again together. Now we have to go see it all," Redemske said, pulling her dad toward the escalators.

Younger folks took off from the gate in a sprint to be the first to buy the \$175 All-Star jerseys and get the first look at the All-Stars' practice whacks.

Clad in White Sox and Cubs gear, sisters Maggie and Kelly McClain of Manteno made an excited march to their front-row seats with little brother Tommy in tow, while the patriarch of the baseball fan family of 12 paced along 35th Street, eventually buying a ticket for \$400 to join them.

"I'll find a ticket, or I'll be the guy ... who gets caught trying and ends up in jail," Sox season-ticket holder Thomas McClain laughed.

Mayor Richard Daley briefly talked to reporters before entering the park. If there was a Chicago casino with a sports book, Daley said he'd be betting on the home team.

"Sports book?" he said laughing. "I'm an American League fan, I make no bones about it."

### **Security out in full force**

At the corner of Wentworth Avenue and blocked-off 35th Street, police used mirrors to check the undercarriages of luxury cars and limousines ferrying players and other VIPs to the U.S. Cellular Field.

"I don't care who they are," one cop barked at a group of officers reluctant to inspect White Sox star pitcher Esteban Loaiza's white Mercedes-Benz coupe. "We still have to check them."

Throughout batting practice and during the game, well over a dozen security officers crouched in the stands and sat back to back on stools along each baseline. Between innings, they partially moved into the infield and stared back, arms crossed, at the crowd.

Police with German shepherds patrolled one entrance.

In addition to the post-Sept. 11 anti-terrorism measures outside the stadium, there was an extra effort to prevent what Major League Baseball security officials call "field incursions" at a ballpark that has seen two well-publicized on-field attacks in the past year.

"Can I tell you that we'll be able to stop everyone? No," Sox spokesman Scott Reifert said before the game. "But we're going to put up as many barriers as possible."

Pairs of uniformed Chicago police strolled the wide concourses, occasionally stopping to take in the game. A much stronger presence outside became a target for camera-toting tourists, who lined up for photos with officers on bikes, horses, golf carts, and in front of one of the department's recreational vehicle-turned-command center.

Chicago police reported no arrests inside or immediately outside the stadium.

With the gates open hours before the on-field festivities began, the rush to the stadium was spread out over the late afternoon and evening. Most fans apparently heeded the warnings to take public transportation; the side streets around the park and the Dan Ryan Expressway remained remarkably clear through the first pitch.

Three hours before the first pitch, a steady stream of fans started moving smoothly

through security, attendants scanning the bar codes on tickets to weed out fake ones. Despite warnings the game had been sold out for months and that scalping would not be tolerated, dozens of people moved through the crowd outside the stadium looking for tickets.

## **Searching for tickets**

Allen Hilder curled his index finger under his thumb and pointed his remaining three fingers skyward.

It was 30 minutes before the first pitch.

The Bridgeport community, where efforts at economic development have been resisted for so long, was transformed into a kind of illegal Board of Trade where deals worth thousands of dollars were consummated in plain view.

Chicago police and White Sox security personnel did little to stop the activity at one hot spot outside Gate 4.

Hilder, flanked by his two young sons, was showing the universal symbol for "I want three tickets" to the game. Let's talk."

The one potential deal-breaker? Hilder was not willing to go more than face value for the tickets. His ceiling was \$150.

The stance made his chances of getting into the stadium remote.

"I heard last night you could have bought anything" for the Home Run Derby, Hilder said. "There were plenty of seats available. I was hoping for the same."

One gentleman approached the Lincoln Park resident, rubbed his chin while obscuring his mouth and whispered. He was offering \$800 for one rightfield seat, about \$650 more than Hilder was willing to spend.

Less than 5 minutes before the game started, reality set in. The cheapest ticket to be had was going for \$300.

The All-Star desires of the Hilder clan would not be getting past the turnstiles.

"I'll just hop on the el and go home," Hilder said. "Buy some souvenirs, buy a program, buy a hat or a jersey and I'll be home in 20 minutes. We cannot lose."

## **The fight for Buck Weaver**

At the corner of 35th and Shields Avenue, 89-year-old Marjorie Follet and her 77-year-old cousin, Pat Anderson, made a wheelchair protest.

The senior citizens and a clan of volunteers handing out fluorescent green T-shirts were collecting petition signatures calling on Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig to reinstate their uncle Buck Weaver, who was banned from baseball as a member of the 1919 White Sox team that fixed the World Series.

The mayor signed the petition on his way into the stadium.

"He's an innocent man," Follet repeated. "There's a lot of people here who are realizing

what a dirty deal (Buck) got. They see why we're out here trying to clear his name. If we get enough signatures maybe the commissioner will let him back in."

Flanked by Dr. David Fletcher, who has organized and bankrolled the "Clear Buck" movement, invited Follet and Anderson to his 10th row seats, where he hoped to force a face-off between Selig and the elderly cousins.

"We're getting a lot of support. We've been on every Chicago TV station. ... I hope this is national news tomorrow. This is a national story," Fletcher said. "I just hope that maybe Selig will finally be a man and acknowledge the family. He's met with Pete Rose."

Fletcher pointed to rumors swirling around the major leagues that Rose may get reinstated soon. It was enough to get Follet riled up.

"I don't have any tussle with Rose. But before they reinstate Pete Rose, they should reinstate Buck Weaver because he's innocent. There's no doubt that Rose did it."

### **Playing the right notes**

Nancy Faust has played the organ at White Sox games since 1970.

The All-Star Game, however, had her hitting the books.

Seems Faust, a walking encyclopedia of music knowledge, was not used to playing for the flood of National League players coming to her park.

Faust resorted to keeping a cheat sheet next to her keyboard. When an NL player went to bat, the perfect song already had been bookmarked.

A pop quiz before the game showed Faust was up for the challenge of playing in front of a national television audience:

Barry Bonds? "I'll play some 'Quarter to Three' by Gary U.S. Bonds. Or the theme from 'Goldfinger.' You know, James Bond."

Todd Helton? "I'll probably do 'Springtime in the Rockies.' "

Scott Rolen " 'Proud Mary.' "

Jason Schmidt? "I don't play for pitchers."

### **And the crowd roars**

Despite the international draw of the All-Star game and the pricey tickets — some topping \$1,000 apiece — offered by brokers, the guarantee that all Sox season-ticket holders could still buy into the game meant there was still a strong South Side presence at the game.

During the team introductions, South Side favorites Loaiza and Magglio Ordonez received by far the largest ovations. But embattled Sox manager Jerry Manuel and players from American League rival teams from Detroit, Cleveland and Kansas City were noticeably booed. And the jeers were even louder for Cubs pitchers Kerry Wood and Mark Prior, and manager Dusty Baker.

Finally, the stadium filled with its largest crowd ever —47,609 — American League starter Loaiza fired a first-pitch strike.



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