



DAN GREER

One of a select few He's a musical tiger

By MIKE SCANLON

Dan Greer is an entertainer who doesn't make the Las Vegas circuit and who never wears a tuxedo on the job.

Last year, he got about 1,935,020 standing ovations—but unless you live near his home on Minerva Street in Westland, you've probably never heard of him.

But you probably have heard him entertain.

Greer, 43, is the organist at Tiger Stadium and at Olympia Stadium.

"I had the ambition to be a pro ballplayer, just like every other kid," said Greer, who was a high school pitcher.

Well, the ranks of professional baseball players are small—but nowhere near as small as the ranks of professional baseball organists. After all, there are 25 players on every team—

there's only one organist.

Greer made his debut at Tiger Stadium six years ago. Since then, he's only missed one home baseball game.

His organ, a \$14,000 Hammond purchased from a local music store to replace one destroyed in a fire at Tiger Stadium last winter, sits at the extreme first base side of the third deck pressbox.

The seats are probably the best in the house.

As you might expect, Greer loves his job. The hours are good and they seldom interfere with his job as a music teacher in Taylor.

"It's a fun thing and with my teaching schedule, it just about works beautifully. It's a joy to come down."

In a recent game against the Texas Rangers, Greer kicked off the start of the first inning with that old classic, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game."

The Tigers acted like they'd have rather stayed home as Texas scored four runs in the first.

"Man, I hate a game when it starts that way. Four runs in the first inning—you're so far behind," Greer said.

At the organ, he batted out the team song, "Go Get 'Em Tigers," but it didn't look like his heart was in it.

Greer is a die-hard baseball fan and when that kind of fan gets to see every home game, well, there's a lot of stories to tell.

"Norm Cash was quite a kiddie," Greer said during the Tiger half of the first. "Once we were playing Nolan Ryan and he had a no hitter going into the ninth inning. Norm was the last man up, and he came to the plate with a stick about six feet long. The ump said, 'Wait a minute,' and Norm said, 'What's the difference? I ain't gonna hit it anyway.'"

The Tigers managed to put three runs across in the first inning, and Greer responded with an upbeat version of "Happy Talk." He cut the tune about midway, ending it with a little flourish at the keyboard—which can bat out the sounds of an oboe, a guitar, a piano, and other instruments as well.

"I sometimes cut it short by putting on an ending where there isn't supposed to be an ending," Greer said. "It really bothers me when some players just stop the tune." A couple of inconclusive innings followed, with no runs scoring, while Greer talked about the job.

"I've talked to Jim Campbell, (the

Tigers general manager) Greer said, in response to a question about whether he ever plays humorous songs during an argument between the manager and the umpire. "His feeling is you've got men down there who're making their livelihood."

Greer said the Tiger organization is "very conservative," and they don't like to hear tunes that might stir up the stadium crowd.

"When Rodriguez came to bat in the seventh inning once, I played 'The Mexican Hat Dance.' Greer said, after playing a quick time version of 'The Pennsylvania Polka' between innings. "The crowd responded, sure, they loved it."

"The next day there were 133 broken seats. They meant to tell me not to play that one again, but they didn't and I played it the next night. There were 39 more broken seats."

"I promise, I won't play that tune again," Greer said.

Greer then played a melodious sounding "Mame."

"At the hockey games, I have much more freedom to fool around. I have to be much more spontaneous. Hockey is a faster game. They get into a big fight and you can play 'Who's A-Raid of The Big Bad Wolf.'"

"Still, my experience has been the organist can stand on his head all night and play with his toes, and if the team's not playing, you're not going to get any response. There has to be a good play or a good fight and then the organ can keep things going."

Greer had a conversation about the Texas Rangers, the Tigers' opponents, and their hometown stadium—one of the league's smallest, with nearly half the seats in the bleachers.

In the next inning, Greer played "Deen In The Heart of Texas."

In the fourth inning rain began falling and Greer led off with "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head."

In the fifth inning, the grounds crew spread dry sand around the pitchers mound and home plate, and Greer played "Red Sands in The Sunset."

In the seventh, the Tigers scored what proved to be the winning run on an upper-deck home run to left center field by Ron LeFlore, and Greer played, "Laughter in The Rain." The rain was still coming down hard at the time.

Dan Greer, who has the best job in the state, had finished another day at work.

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