

STREET SCENE

Oscar contest winners — 4D

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Opening Day cards

You won't find these in a pack of bubble gum



RIP COLLINS Clubhouse manager

Please don't spit seeds on the carpet. They clog the vacuum.

Thanz — Rip

That sign is the last thing guys like George Brett, Rickey Henderson and Roger Clemens see before entering the tunnel to the field at Tiger Stadium.

It's one way visitors' clubhouse manager Rip Collins keeps a handle on things. After all, with often-rambunctious players from 13 major-league clubs passing through in the course of a season, it's hard to keep a tidy house.

COLLINS, a Livonia resident, is in his 13th year of running the Tigers' visitors' clubhouse. He has a four-man crew to help him, including the two visitors' bat boys.

It's Collins' and his crew's job to keep the place stocked with goodies, launder the players' clothes, make sure their equipment gets onto and off the field and cook them a postgame meal.

"It's a time-consuming job," Collins said. "We put 14-15 hours a day in here when the team is in town."

About a month ago Collins unlocked the clubhouse from cold storage to prepare for the New York Yankees, the Tigers' Opening Day opponents. That meant doing things like making sure the coffee maker is still working and that no mice got into the laundry basket again.

FOR TODAY'S game the clubhouse will be stocked with tobacco, candy, gum, drinks, sunflower seeds and fruit — a particular Yankee favorite.

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By Richard Lech
staff writer

Anybody can get baseball cards of Mike Schmidt, Dwight Gooden and Jim Rice.

This week Street Scene offers something different — behind-the-scenes baseball cards.

These are the unsung heroes — and heroines — of Opening Day: The clubhouse manager, the bat boy, the usher and the person who inspects

all those delicious Tiger Stadium hot dogs.

One word of advice, though: Don't try to stick them in the spokes of your bicycle to get that "motoreye-le sound." These cards are only made of paper and are more likely to go "flap-flap" than "putt-putt."

Staff photos
by Art Emanuele

JOHN NANNES

Usher

The area between Sections 417 and 418 at Tiger Stadium is John Nannes' domain.

Like a teacher watching over an unruly class of first graders, Nannes keeps his eyes constantly roving over his section.

Has that fan over there smuggled in an illicit can of beer? Is that drunk about to pass over the line from good-natured revelry to violence? Is some malcontent about to toss something hard and dangerous onto the field?

As an usher, it's Nannes' job to know.

"You've got to let people know you're watching," the Garden City resident said.

But all work and none of the play on the field could make ushering a dull job. Nannes gets to watch the some of the game too, but "not as much as I would like."

"When we're busy, I'm lucky to see the game until the seventh inning," he said.

Even though an usher has to be stern at times, Nannes basically is a friendly, garrulous guy who enjoys what he's doing.

"I love it because I'm with people. I love the children when they have those promotional days."

Nannes has been working his section — which is in the upper deck, just to the third base side of home plate — since 1974. But he first worked as a Tiger Stadium usher in 1960 and got his first job in the stadium, directing fans and wiping seats, in 1947.

Over the years he has met the famous and infamous. He escorted Jake "Haging Bull" LaMotta into the ring for his fight with Marcel Cerdan in the late 1940s at what was then Briggs Stadium.

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SALLY STEPHENSON

Hot dog inspector

When you bite into your Opening Day hot dog at Tiger Stadium, say a silent thank you to Sally Stephenson of Canton Township.

Because of her that frank will fit snugly in the bun. And you won't chomp on a tough little hot dog tip or chew on a piece of casing either.

Stephenson is a hot dog inspector at the Hygrade plant in Livonia, where every one of those Ballpark Franks is made. It's her job to make sure that nothing but aesthetically pleasing dogs make their way to the ballpark.

"It's a final inspection, to make sure there aren't any broken ones or ones that are too long. It's purely an appearance thing," assures plant manager Jerry Beale.

Stephenson's been working for Hygrade's for 18 years and in that time has seen, handled and smelled a lot of hot dogs. Does she have an appetite for them by the time she gets home?

"Sometimes yes, sometimes no," she said with a smile.

"But I only eat Ballparks," she added loyally.

This year marks the 30th year that Hygrade has been supplying the Tiger Stadium dogs.

Your typical Ballpark Frank usually starts off on the hoof somewhere west of the Mississippi, Beale said. The beef then comes to the Livonia Hygrade plant in 12,000-pound units.

The meat, similar in fat content to a hamburger, is ground up very, very fine. Grinding is the crucial stage of the hot-dog maker's art. The meat is then packed in a casing that forms it and

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Street Scene's pennant picks

Inside S²

Juggernauts

The only thing most people juggle is their bankbook. But a growing number of juggling aficionados are staying fit and having fun by keeping things up in the air.

Dating dilemma

With the threat of AIDS hanging over everything, more and more people are looking for stable, lasting relationships with that special someone. Dating services have adapted to the changing singles scene.

Pee-Wee's venture

Pee-Wee Herman is taking on "The Smurfs" in a no-holds-barred grudge match. Will Saturday morning television ever be the same again?

The laser's edge

Using a whole rainbow of beams, laser wizards put on lightning-fast shows with a kaleidoscope of images. A local firm specializes in tripping the light fantastic.

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By Richard Lech
staff writer

At first glance, it's shaping up to be a long, boring season for the Detroit Tigers.

Somewhere it's hard to get excited about watching Mike Heath make \$650,000 not to catch.

And we won't be at the edge of our seat wondering whether Terry Harper or Larry Herndon will have the better stats by season's end.

BUT YA gotta believe. The Tigers do have the basis for one of the sounder pitching staffs around. If everybody — and we mean everybody, Dan Petry — comes through, the pitchers could still make things interesting for the Tigers.

Not interesting enough to repeat that 1984 magic, but interesting enough to be less than 10 games out by July 4. But we predict the Tigers will end up in sixth, beating out only

the Milwaukee Brewers.

If this is not the Year of the Tiger, to whom does it belong?

Our Street Scene picks are the Toronto Blue Jays and the Kansas City Royals in the American League and the New York Mets and Cincinnati Reds in the National.

And we predict the Jays will finally win that first World Series, four games to three over the Mets.

PAT COLLINS Bat boy

Big-league ballplayers have some major-league superstitions. If they're on a hot streak, they'll wear the same clothes every day, no matter how smelly they become. And before a game, nobody — not even the bat boy — had better be handling their bats.

"Usually a player's bat is gold; they don't want anybody touching it," said Pat Collins of Livonia, who worked for nine years as a visitors' bat boy at Tiger Stadium.

After the game it's a different story, though.

"That leaves me about 80 bats to take back by end of game," Collins said. "Even your non-starting rookies bring out three bats. Some guys bring a dozen. Reggie Jackson is great for that."

Collins, 22, now works as a clubhouse attendant with his dad, visitors' clubhouse manager Rip Collins. Pat hung up his bat boy spikes last year after working in the Equity Old-Timers Game.

"That's when I knew I was out to pasture," Collins said with a laugh. "I was bat boy for the old-timers."

As visitors' bat boy, he wore the uniform of whatever team was in town and kept tabs on their bats during the game. But much of his work came before and after the game — setting up the equipment, taking it back in, and even sweeping the long tunnel leading from the clubhouse to the field.

Of the hundreds, many thousands of big-league bats he's seen over the years, several stand out, Collins said.

"Willie Wilson's — it didn't make your hip. It looks like a little league bat you'd see a kid using at a park in Livonia. And I did finally get to see Brett's pine-bar too."

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