

# Detroit Tiger's batboy grateful for opportunity

By KEN VOYLES

Long hours, hard work and very little money are the negative sides to being a batboy at Tiger Stadium.

But the excitement, glamour and prestige of being involved with the league's big name ballplayers make the job worthwhile.

Bob Collins, who will be a senior at Livonia Franklin next fall, should know what it's like to be a batboy for a professional baseball team. He has been one for the last four years.

Collins is the batboy for the visiting teams at Tiger Stadium.

A number of years ago, the Tigers' management asked Collins' father, Rip, to be the visiting clubhouse manager. He accepted.

About four years ago, the elder Collins was having trouble with a number of batboys. It seems equipment was being stolen from the visitors' locker room. In 1974, he called in his son and asked him to keep an eye on the other batboys.

"My father wanted me down there to keep an eye on things and pretty soon I was doing their job. One thing told me another and I became the full-time batboy in June of that year," Collins explained.

Collins played hockey at Franklin last winter and hopes to do so this year. He also plays on a summer baseball team when he gets the chance to work in the games around his Tiger schedule.

There are many things about the fulltime job that would make the average person shy away. Collins sometimes spends 13 hours a day at the stadium. He is paid \$14 a day no matter how long he is there.

It has its rewards, though.

"It is a good experience," Collins said. "There are a few fringe benefits to being a batboy, such as being able to sell the used and broken equipment. Even that stuff goes for a big price."

Collins remembers he was once offered \$400 for Carl Yastrzemski's Boston Red Sox uniform. He didn't take the offer because that would have been outright stealing on his part.

Besides the obvious benefit of getting to know the ballplayers, Collins said he gets the best possible baseball education at Tiger Stadium. "I have some great teachers down there at the stadium. I love baseball and would like to play in the major leagues someday."

A typical summer day for Collins begins around 1 p.m. when he arrives at the stadium for a night game. After arriving, he changes into his uniform for the day, be it Boston, Chicago, or New York, and starts to clean up the clubhouse before the visitors arrive.

The visiting teams supply the uniform, and Collins gets to keep the hat. Collins mops the floor, cleans out the lockers, shines shoes, picks up the uniforms and sets them out for each player.

Two other boys help Collins do the dirty work. They're known as clubhouse assistants.

Once the team shows up at the stadium, it is Collins' job to make sure the equipment and uniforms for each individual player is satisfactory.

Between the time he cleans up the clubhouse and the start of the game, Collins has a little free time. He can get something to eat, take a nap or walk around the ballpark.

When the teams take to the field for batting practice, Collins is right there with them. Either he's shagging hits,

playing catch with the pitchers or just watching the teams at work.

During the game, Collins does various things like picking up the equipment around the dugout and preparing bats for each player. He watches the game when he can.

The hard work starts when the game is over. Collins picks up the locker room, cleans the whole place over again and does the laundry. He practically does everything that he did before the game. Collins' day typically ends at about 1:30 a.m.

"It's not as glamorous as everybody thinks, being a batboy. I tell my friends that and they just can't believe it," Collins said.

"I was on cloud nine my first year as a batboy. In my second and third summers, things weren't so great. I realized that the players on your toes all of the time," Collins continued.

Being around such great players all of the time has taken some of the fun away from the job for Collins. He no longer collects autographs although he does collect equipment the players give him. He has hats, spikes and even a glove here and there from the traveling professionals.

Overall, according to Collins, the visiting team players are very nice to him although some irritate him by calling him "clubby" instead of Bob.

"Sometimes I sit down and talk with

the players about everything from school to girls to baseball. Most guys like to talk before the game but not after," Collins said.

Dave Nelson used to be Collins' favorite player. Nelson played for Kansas City until he was released two years ago. Collins has not seen him since.

"We used to talk and joke all of the time. He called me, 'Tobacco-chewing Bob' because I was the only batboy he'd ever seen that chewed tobacco," Collins explained.

Not all of Collins' memories of the job are good ones. Collins cites last August, when he was hit by a line drive, as being the most memorable

incident of his batboy career. He was about twenty yards into the outfield helping Frank Howard and another player with hitting practice. Collins was relaying the ball back into the infield.

"All I remember is seeing a ball coming right at my face," said Collins.

This summer will most likely be Collins' last as a batboy. He'll be 18 years old soon and the Tigers prefer younger boys for the job.

Collins has been offered a baseball scholarship at Florida State once he completes high school. He said that he is most likely going to accept the offer.

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## Track picks

**SECOND TEAM:** Long jump—Mark McBroom, Avondale; High jump—Rick McKibben, Farmington; Pole vault—Larry Varley, Brother Rice; Shot put—Andy Lytle, Groves; Discus—Mark Biehl, North Farmington; Two mile—Harold Rutla, Farmington; Low hurdles—Jeff Goforth, Southfield-Lathrup; 880 Relay—Troy; 800 run—Chris Morgan, Lahser; 100-yard dash—Mike Stamps, Lahser; High hurdles—Art Doran, North Farmington; 440 dash—Mark Redman, Seaholm; Mile run—Bob Church, Southfield; 440 relay—Troy; 220 dash—Mike Stamps, Lahser; Mile relay, Birmingham Groves.

**HONORABLE MENTION:** Ian Joseph, Troy; Athens; Terry Weathers, Rochester; Jeff Davis, Rochester; Adams; Ken Wilder, Auburn Heights; Avondale; Robbie Henderson, Brother Rice; Mark Lee, Southfield; Dan Double, Troy; Larry Weathers, Rochester; Bob Morden, North Farmington; Chris Cartwright, West

Bloomfield, Earl Watson, Troy; Greg Symon, Southfield-Lathrup; Jeff Sherman, Bloomfield Hills; Andover; Jeff Shanbrom, West Bloomfield; Mark Lunetta, Groves; Chuck Steltenkamp, Troy; Dave Schrader, West Bloomfield; Chuck Dew, Troy; Dave Eberle, Rochester; Al Tingley, Avondale; Greg Lahr, Southfield; Jamie Jackson, Troy; Athens; Mark Henn, Troy; Scott Johansson, Troy; Phil Ruffino, Lahser; Jack Moran, Rochester; Adams; Keith Taylor, Rochester; Chris Nigab; Lahser, Chris Henn, Troy; Rob Carter, Rochester; Gary Sutherland, Rochester; Adams; Peter Claypool, Seaholm; Dave Koppin, Detroit Country Day; Bill Kendro, Seaholm; Ted Wehrle, Troy; Steve Whitten, Andover; Phil Buffino, Lahser; Phil Konopitski, Avondale; Tim Winskip, Groves; Make Wasserman, Troy; John Gosman, Avondale; Andy Kraus, Southfield-Lathrup; Barry Tornow, Andover; Pete Byerlin, Rice.

## Plymouthite victorious in tennis tournament

Graham Snook of Plymouth captured \$750 first place prize money as he defeated Chuck Brainard of Bay View, 7-5, 6-4, in the sixth annual Sibley's Detroit Tennis Club invitational tennis tournament last weekend.

The tournament, held at the Detroit Tennis and Squash Club in Farmington Hills, featured Men's 35, 45, and 55-year-old divisions, along with a Women's singles event. Winners in each of these events, except the Men's 55 and older division, received \$100 first place prize money.

Other victors included Barb Fischley of Dear-

born, who defeated Diane Seike of Detroit, 6-0, 6-1, in the women's singles.

In the men's 35 singles, Mircea Moraitu of Birmingham beat Bob Martin of Columbus, Ohio, 6-0, 5-7, 7-6 (5-2 in the tie breaker). In the men's 45 division, Leonard Brose of Southfield was the victor over Charles Karabell of Oak Park when Karabell was forced to retire in the second set because of leg cramps.

Bill Mitchell of Bloomfield Hills won the men's 55 event by beating Bill Maul of Detroit, 6-1, 2-6, 6-1. Harry Goldberg of Farmington Hills was a semi-finals loser.

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