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# Fanfest—a baseball fan's dream

By STEVAN LeBLANC  
The Herald

Baseball's first ever All-Star Fanfest, held at the Metro Convention Centre in Toronto to complement this year's All-Star game, lived up to its title - it was indeed a feast for baseball fans.

For a city that has very little major league baseball history of its own, Toronto managed to excite, entertain, and inform crowds of North Americans with all of the wonders and highlights that go along with the game, both past and present.

As a pure, almost religious fan of the sport, I must admit I was a little sceptic as to how the game I have grown to love would be presented at such an event.

My worries soon turned to enjoyment; from the opening ceremonies with Hall of Famers Fergie Jenkins and Boog Powell to the moment I left, I can honestly say that it was one of the best days I have ever experienced.

To inform as well as entertain, a good chunk of the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, was

on loan to Toronto. A replica of the actual building was constructed where fans could see first hand, pictures and articles of some of baseball's all-time greats including Hank Aaron, Ted Williams, and Willie Stargill.

There was something for everyone at the first ever Fanfest. While adults and teenagers tested their skills in the batting cages or the bullpen, youngsters were able to win prizes at "Field of Dreams County Fair" or get their picture printed on an actual baseball card at "Fantasy Photos."

Other interesting displays included Rawlings "Making of the Game" where fans could watch skilled craftsmen create the bats that are used in the major leagues and Kellogg's Knot Hole Gang, where one could re-live great moments in baseball history.

While there was a great deal to see and do at the All-Star Fanfest, I feel there was too much card trading going on. As

one who collects baseball cards myself, I think there is a limit to how much this should be a part of the game. It seemed as though a lot of people were there just to buy and sell cards. But, to each his own.

The highlight of my day at Fanfest came early in the afternoon. There I was, face to face with one of the best first basemen in Blue Jays' history, John Mayberry, as the legend signed my baseball. As I handed him the ball he looked up, smiled, and asked "How ya doing partner?"

It was a moment I'll not soon forget.

When the day had ended and it was time to leave, I began to feel part of history - that I was present when major league baseball finally brought all of the great moments and wonders of America's pastime under one roof, in Canada.

Those in the United States who weren't so lucky to witness the first All-Star Fanfest can only hope the event continues next year in San Diego.



Along with memorabilia from the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, the Coca-Cola All-Star Fanfest also displayed many articles from Blue Jay History including a ticket to their first game played at Exhibition Stadium and two of the first Blue Jay jerseys ever worn. (Herald photo)



Fans were able to experience the thrill of being a player in the All-Star locker room during the Coca-Cola All-Star Fanfest. The Gillette "All-Star

Clubhouse" displayed jerseys and other clothing worn by major league players. (Herald photo)



The world of baseball could be seen through an artistic eye during Coca-Cola's All-Star Fanfest at the Metro Convention Centre in Toronto. At the five-day baseball extravaganza, Sport Art International

presented the Robert Stephen Simon collection: "The World of Sport" - a captivating art collection of sports heroes from the past and present. (Herald photo)

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