



# In the Upper Deck at Shea, Passing Time With America's Pastime



Jason Szenes for The New York Times

Members of Stitch N' Pitch chatted and crocheted Wednesday night at Shea Stadium before the Mets game against the Braves.

By TEDDY KIDER  
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A lifelong [Yankees](#) fan sat in the upper deck of Shea Stadium last night in a full [Mets](#) uniform, wearing a jersey, baseball pants and a cap, with a glove and ball in one hand. She was beaming with pride.

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Lily Chin, widely recognized as the world's fastest crocheter, had knitted or crocheted each of the Mets-themed items over the weekend, when allegiances were shattered in honor of Stitch N' Pitch day.

The Mets and local needle arts stores sold more than 800 discounted tickets for last night's game against the [Braves](#), when people from all over the metropolitan area gathered to knit, crochet and embroider in the stands.

"Instead of coming back and being wasted from beer, you have a project at the end of the game," Chin, who was reared in the Bronx and lives in Greenwich Village, said last week.

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The way organizers told it, two pastimes as American as baseball and needle arts were destined to be together.

“The rhythms of baseball fit the rhythms of needle arts,” Barbara Paley, marketing specialist for the National NeedleArts Association, said yesterday.

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The Stitch N’ Pitch program had its unofficial start in 2005, when retail needle arts stores in Seattle began a

program at [Mariners](#) games, Paley said. The national association facilitated the nationwide expansion of the program last year, with 15 major league teams involved.

The Mets, new to the program this year, are one of 25 teams that scheduled days for needle arts enthusiasts this season. Patty Parrish, executive director of association, said in a recent telephone interview that her organization had unsuccessful discussions with the Yankees.

“We’re certainly hoping they’ll work with us next year,” Parrish said, adding that the Yankees were either not interested or could not fit the event into their schedule.

So several Yankees fans showed up at Shea Stadium last night, united with Mets fans by their love for needle arts and by their fascination with blue goodie bags that came with their tickets. The bags included yarn, needle arts magazines and light-up needles — because it was a night game, of course.

Stitch N’ Pitch is merely an extension of a long history of large social groups meeting to work on needle arts projects. There are social gatherings around the world, often called Stitch ’n Bitch groups, for knitters and crocheters to meet and chat, needles in hand.

Several members of a Long Island group arrived two hours before the game, eager to begin work on handmade caps for cancer patients and premature babies.

With Stitch N’ Pitch, Major League Baseball teams can reach out to people who need more than a game to stay interested. One of those was Debbie Stoller, who said in a telephone interview last week that she usually rooted for whichever New York team was the most successful and had never been to a baseball game.

“With knitting needles in my hand, I think I could enjoy it,” said Stoller, a Brooklyn resident and author of the popular “Stitch ’N Bitch” series of handbooks.

The occasional or sometimes frequent lulls of baseball, as well as the sport’s place in American tradition, made it an ideal match with needle arts for those like Parrish, who called it “the perfect hookup.”

But there is potential for broader appeal — the [Portland Trail Blazers](#) have already had a Loop ’N’ Hoop event, Parrish said.

“It does lend itself to other sports,” she said. “I can see it expanding, especially with retail stores wanting to reach communities.”

As the heat index hovered near 100 degrees last night and Mr. Met stood on the field in a handmade scarf, some Mets fans might have thought the scarf would be better suited for a hockey or football mascot. But for Stitch N’ Pitch participants, that scarf probably looked perfect on Mr. Met.

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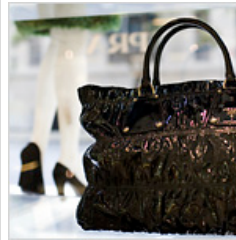
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