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### REGION: Knitters stitch with the Padres

By PHILIP K. IRELAND - Staff Writer | Monday, June 30, 2008 6:10 PM PDT ∞

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SAN DIEGO ---- Baseball, hot dogs, peanuts, cold beer and ---- knitting?

Armed with yarn, needles, patterns and a zest for gabbing, about 200 knitters from across the county blanketed Petco Park's section 310 on Sunday as part of a national push by Major League Baseball and The National Needlearts Association to recruit new fans.

Watch the video

The Stitch and Pitch movement began a few years ago in Seattle and is now hosted by 25 of the 30 Major League baseball franchises in parks across the country, said Libby Gluck, publicist for national association promoting knitting, needlepoint, crochet, cross-stitch and embroidery.

The Pads honored the group on the field before the game Sunday by recognizing the owners of three local knitting shops.

"They help us get to a demographic we might not typically get to as baseball fans," said Nick Zantotto, a spokesman for the San Diego Padres before Sunday's game as knitters checked in to claim their swag ---- a roll of yarn and a special edition Padres baseball cap with "Stitch and Pitch" embroidered on the back.

Up in section 310, fingers flew and knitting needles clicked as the mostly female crowd fashioned socks, sweaters, handbags and small swatches for larger projects.

"It's a sock monkey. See its little butt?," said Rebecca Zelt of La Mesa, holding up a sock-like thing with two long legs and a bright red rump.

So what do you do with a sock monkey?

"You've never played with a sock monkey?" Zelt said, clearly wondering how this reporter had survived so long without knowledge of sock monkeys.

"Sock monkeys do whatever you want ---- sit on your lap, do a little dance," she said, making the poor knitted sock sit on her lap and then dance on her knees.

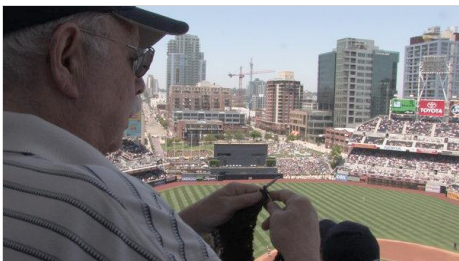
Sitting with three knitting friends, Zelt said knitting and baseball is as natural as baseball and hot dogs.

"Knitting one of our hobbies anyway, and we enjoy ball games so why not surround yourself with your friends, knit, watch a little ball, eat a hot dog and drink a beer ---- and knit sock monkeys, and socks," Zelt said.

Dr. Richard Luros of Rancho Santa Fe was one of a few men in the stands knitting away.

"This is how I end up surrounded by beautiful women," said Luros as he knitted a sweater. "It's all a play."

The Padres lost 9-2 to the Seattle Mariners ---- perhaps the "cold-bat kids" could hire the knitters to stitch them bat-warmers.



Dr. Richard Luros of Rancho Santa Fe knits a sweater at Petco Park on Sunday as part of the Stitch and Pitch program. About 200 knitters gathered for the annual event that began in Seattle and now takes place in ballparks across the country. (Philip K. Ireland - Staff Photographer)



Some 200 knitters from across the county gathered at Petco Park on Sunday as part of the Stitch and Pitch program. The annual event began in Seattle and now takes place in ballparks across the country. (Philip K. Ireland - Staff Photographer)



Beth Hogan of Scripps Ranch knits a knitting bag at Petco Park on Sunday as part of the Stitch and Pitch program. About 200 knitters gathered for the annual event that began in Seattle and now takes place in ballparks across the country. (Philip K. Ireland - Staff Photographer)

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Knitters blanket Petco for Stitch 'n' Pitch

For more information on "Stitch and Pitch," go to the association Web site at [www.TNNA.org](http://www.TNNA.org).

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