

MBA COMMISSIONERS HELP CELEBRATE HISTORIC WEEKEND AT TARGET FIELD



MBA Commissioners pose for a photo on the field after throwing out the ceremonial first pitches on April 2, 2010.

The weekend exhibition series between the Minnesota Twins and the St. Louis Cardinals at Target Field doesn't count in the win/loss column, but the two games – the first two Twins games ever at Target Field - matter a great deal to the ballpark project team and the thousands of fans across the state who have waited nearly three decades for this historic event.

“This weekend marks a culmination of years of hard work by the entire project team,” MBA Chair Steve Cramer said Friday night after he and fellow MBA Commissioners threw out the ceremonial first pitches. “The Twins and our public and private sector partners have shown an unprecedented commitment to making Target Field a world class facility for all Minnesotans to enjoy.”

After 28 seasons in the Metrodome, nearly 33,000 fans finally saw the return of outdoor major league baseball to Minnesota on Friday night April 2, 2010. The field's high-tech drainage system seemed to work perfectly as rain fell throughout the morning and early afternoon. Then, about two hours before the first pitch, the sun broke through the clouds and began to shine on the first fans who entered Target Field's gates.

MBA Commissioner John Wade watched in awe.

“It's a remarkable experience for players and fans alike. Everyone's thrilled to be here,” Wade said. “It's surreal to see this project get to this point from where we started. It's a true credit to Mortenson Construction, the Twins and Hennepin County. The ballpark has exceeded expectations.”

In addition to the first pitches by MBA Commissioners, the Twins hosted several pre-game events paying tribute to those who helped build Target Field. More than 1,000 workers from Mortenson Construction, the ballpark's general contractor, took part in an on-field parade, and the Mortenson Construction Choir sang the national anthem. The hundreds of subcontractors on the project the past few years were also honored in a special video played on the Target Field scoreboard prior to the first pitch.

“It took a lot of hard work to build the partnerships needed to overcome a very challenging construction site,” MBA Commissioner Michael Vekich said. “Mortenson Construction has built a best-in-series ballpark, and I'm honored to be a part of the historic process.”

Between now and Opening Day, the team is also paying tribute to several of the Twin's greatest players. On Friday, Commissioner Vekich, along with representatives from the team, helped unveil a bronze statue of Hall of Famer Rod Carew on Target Plaza.

The statute of former Twin's slugger Harmon Killebrew was unveiled on Saturday afternoon. Local artist Bill Mack designed both pieces of art, which the Twins helped fund through additional contributions to the project.

The Twins investment now stands at \$195 million, \$65 million more than what was outlined in the 2006 Ballpark Legislation. The contributions were earmarked for a variety of uses but have been primarily focused on enhancements to the overall fan experience, ballpark design, architecture and sustainability.

“The Pohlads family and the Twins deserve credit for their additional level of investment,” MBA Chair Steve Cramer said. “This would have been a fine ballpark based on the initial budget. The Pohlads made this an outstanding ballpark.”

“It’s just so beautiful,” MBA Commissioner Joan Campbell added. “We looked at a lot of ballparks over the last four years and this is the best.”