

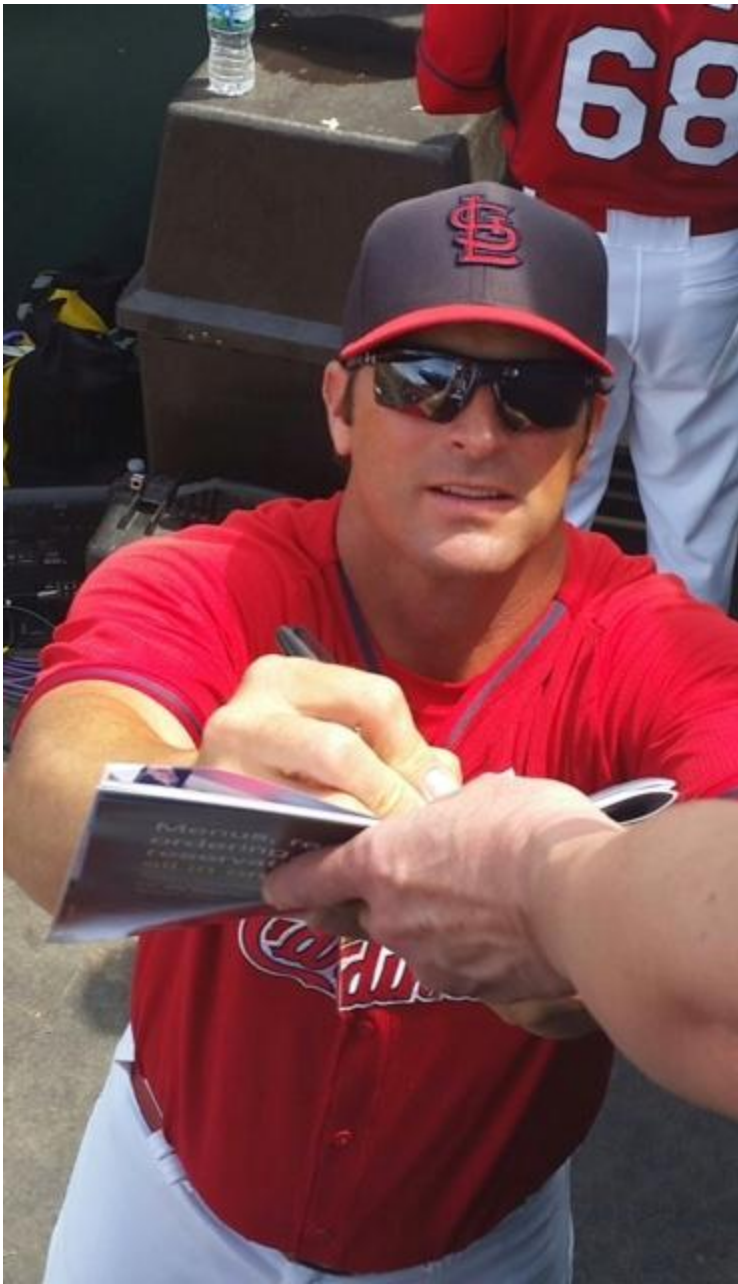
Cardinals fans share stories of spring training in Florida, ready for Home Opener

by Brittany Kohler, Content Manager
April 13 2015 11:19 AM



Cards Fever is without a doubt in full throttle in the St. Louis area. As many anticipate the Home Opener on today, others are still telling the stories and sharing the memories of spring training.

Many friends and families of the RiverBend couldn't wait until mid-April to watch the Cardinals in action, and got their Cardinals fix in early during spring training.



Carol Kohler of Holiday Shores traveled to Jupiter, Fla. for the second time to attend spring training with a group of friends from the Edwardsville area. Julie Johnson, Vic Langendorf and Lori Rankin shares their journey of true Cardinal bliss in Jupiter Florida.

“Our common thread is our love for Cardinal baseball and all our children have attended Metro East Lutheran High School,” said Kohler. “We start planning our trip in January, occasionally meeting at one of our favorite Cardinal hot spots, Mike Shannon's Grill in Edwardsville. Once we get our flights booked, everything else just seems to fall into place. The sole purpose of our trip is to see as much Cardinal baseball as possible. A team day off means a day at the beach for us.”

The veteran spring training ladies know just how to go about planning for tickets to the games.

“Many games sell out, however, we've come to learn that good seats are always available,” said Kohler. “Lady Luck went to bat for us and we scored tickets directly behind the Cardinal dugout for our first game, allowing for some awesome photo opportunities I might add. Day two was almost as good. Game three we decided to purchase \$15 berm (lawn) tickets. The rain interruption created a challenge, however, we eventually found regular seats.

The ladies agree that meeting all the baseball fans, especially Cardinal fans, is a highlight of the trip, but it surely doesn't beat meeting the players.

“Many of the players sign and pose for pictures for the fans, including Manager Mike Matheny, my personal favorite,” said Kohler. “There is a fan store at the stadium with unique spring training logo items. My new ball cap is now home to four proven and rising ball players' autographs: Cruz, Pham, Grichuk, and Scruggs.”

The Graham family from Fosterburg also took a fun-filled Cardinals baseball trip solely to root on the birds.

“Cardinal Baseball is something that our entire family enjoys,” said Graham. “My husband and I were both brought up as Cardinal fans attending games as we grew up. Some of my best memories as a child involved the Cardinals. We've even held partial season tickets, on years that our budget allowed for them. Anytime we make the playoffs or World Series you're more than likely to find us at the game.”



Sonja and Bobby enjoy passing on the Cardinals baseball fan legacy to their daughter Alayna and use any opportunity they can to take advantage of watching the boys play.

“Our goal in life is to see the Cardinals play in every stadium,” said Graham. “That is typically how we celebrate our wedding anniversary, traveling to see the Cardinals in a different stadium.”

Sonja and Bobby share many memories from attending ball games together and they keep the traditions alive with their daughter, Alayna, who is of course a die-hard Cards fan as well.

“Now, our daughter who is five, enjoys games with us,” said Graham. “The other fans around us are always amazed with how into the game a five year old, girl at that, is into it.”

The Graham family said the trip was an “absolute blast” and after the long winter, they are grateful to be able to enjoy what they love to do as a family before the season started.

“We met several of the players at spring training, the setting is much smaller, the players are able to interact much more with the fans,” said Graham. “My daughter came home with five balls and two signatures.”



Like Kohler and her friends, meeting the players was the climax of the trip.

“We really enjoyed how we were able to interact with the players,” said Graham. “There were a couple of players who even remembered us at the second game from being at the first game. We can thank our daughter for that, she certainly made herself unforgettable.”

Opening Day is here! Are you excited?

“It’s a family tradition for us to go to Opening Day,” said Graham. “Opening Day is considered a holiday in our household. We typically go down early to enjoy the festivities outside the stadium and make our way into the Stadium for the opening ceremonies.”

“Rain or shine, I will be at Busch Stadium on April 13th,” said Kohler. “I’m praying for sunshine though. For the Clydesdales to be there, we need sunshine.”

