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OU student takes baseball road trip

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Until this summer, OU freshman Mark Bowen hadn't seen much of the United States beyond the Midwest. But through baseball, he's gaining first-hand experience of the fabric of the nation.

With some time off following the spring semester, Bowen and his older brother David decided to fulfill every baseball fan's dream by traveling the country and Canada to see games in each of the major league's 30 cities (and a few minor league stops).

The thousands of miles racked up on Bowen's Ford Explorer and several dozen consumed hot dogs are testaments to their experiences.

"Doing this trip is just an excuse to see the rest of the United States," said Bowen from Philadelphia, his 27th major league city since the trip began in June. "We're basically doing it just for fun. We have a lot of down time when we're not at a game, so we've done some tourist type things.

"When we were in California, we went to Hollywood and we went to the beach while we were in Florida. We didn't have tickets to the All-Star Game, so we had a few days off there to just relax. We've also stayed with some friends along the way."

The brothers also are recording some information during their journey, such as the quality of each ballpark's food and ambiance, sightlines, prices, parking and anything else you can imagine from a fan's perspective.

"We haven't decided what to do with this information yet," said Bowen, a political science major. "When the trip is over, we'll compile it and see what we want to do. It's been suggested to us that we could write an article or book, and we're open to that possibility."

So how do the different ballparks compare to one another?

"We've noticed that the parks can be put into two categories: new and old," Bowen said. "We've found it's really hard to compare the two sets with each other. The new ones are very comfortable, but the older ones have a lot more history. That makes the trip very interesting.

"We really enjoyed (Boston's) Fenway Park and (Chicago's) Wrigley Field. Both of them have a ton of history. It's very tough to replicate that sense of history in a new park. (Baltimore's) Camden Yards is probably the nicest of the new stadiums. I think anyone planning to build a new stadium should look to Camden Yards as a model."

Bowen said the worst ballparks he's seen are the Network Associates Coliseum in Oakland and Olympic Stadium in Montreal, mainly because of poor sightlines and a lack of an intangible, which rabid fans call a "baseball atmosphere."

"We liked Comerica Park," said Bowen of the Detroit Tigers' home. "We found that we enjoyed the majority of the stadiums we've visited. I'd say Comerica would be in the lower top ten of all the parks."

The brothers started their journey in Detroit and made short weekend stops in Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Minnesota and Kansas City. On June 20, they hit the road for the bulk of the trip by driving to St. Louis. They also had a few adventures along the way.

"After the Midwest, we went to Denver and Seattle," Bowen said. "Then we drove down the west coast, hit Arizona, Texas and Florida, then back up the east coast into Canada to Montreal and Toronto. Our last game before coming home will be on August 5 in Cleveland.

"In Los Angeles, a few hours before the Dodgers game we ran into a group of people from South Carolina on a similar baseball trip. They had been traveling to a few different stadiums every year for the past few years. They invited us to stay at their place in South Carolina when we were passing through, so we did. In L.A., we also ran into two guys from New York who were also visiting each of the parks. We talked with them for a while and traded some stories. Later on, we ran into those same guys at

the ballparks in Arizona and Texas – now what are the chances of that happening?”

Bowen estimates the trip will cost a little under \$4,000, the main cost being gas.

“We spent a few nights sleeping in the car to save some money,” Bowen said. “But we’ve also had a few motel rooms for showers. For the most part, we bought our tickets on the spot, except for places like Fenway Park and Yankee Stadium where we had to buy them in advance.

“You can’t put a price on the experiences we’ve had or the things we’ve seen. It’s definitely been a summer to remember.”

SUMMARY

With some time off following the spring semester, OU freshman Mark Bowen and older brother David are fulfilling every baseball fan's dream by traveling the country to see games in each major league city. The thousands of miles racked up on Bowen's Ford Explorer and several dozen consumed hot dogs are testaments to their experiences.

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