NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

DAILY NEWS, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2001

Baseball helps heal stricken city

Fans of every stripe roar with emotion

By SCOTT SHIFREL and BILL HUTCHINSON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

The national pastime returned to New York last night, as Shea Stadium filled with tears for those killed in the World Trade Center attacks and cheers for America.

A flag-waving crowd of 41,235 withstood huge lines amid tight security to attend the city's first major outdoor sporting event since last week's tragedy.

While the Mets' late-season pennant run against the archrival Atlanta Braves was part of the draw, many fans said they came to show the city's resolve to bounce back.

"I hated the Mets before this," said Yankee fan Richard Pinero of Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, who lost a friend in the twin towers attacks. "But right now we're just one team, New York."

The Mets won 3-2 as Mike Piazza smashed a two-run homer in the eighth inning to cap a spirit-boosting night for the city.

"This here is just what the doctor ordered," said Firefighter Joe Tarantini, 34, Ladder Co. 138 in Corona, Queens, who lost two buddies in the disaster. "For the first time in what seems like such a long time I smiled."

Stars and stripes of all sizes flapped in the breeze and were sewed onto the backs of the players' jerseys. One flag, three stories tall, hung from the stadium's south exterior, while signs reading, "God Bless America" hung on the Mets' dugout.

On top of the 130-foot-tall centerfield scoreboard stood a black silhouette of the New York skyline that included the World Trade Center towers wrapped in a red, white and blue ribbon.

Even Mayor Giuliani, the city's No. 1 Yankees fan, came to thank the Mets players and coaches for donating their pay from last night's game to help the families of the victims and for wearing caps bearing the NYPD, FDNY and EMS logos.

"Rudy! Rudy!" the crowd cheered.

"I think the city will be back to normal when they start booing me again at Shea Stadium," Giuliani quipped.

Tearful pre-game tribute

The pre-game festivities brought tears to many, including rescue workers who attended the game with relatives of firefighters, police and emergency workers killed.

After Diana Ross belted out "God Bless America," the crowd chanted, "USA! USA!"

Marc Anthony sang the National Anthem and the NYPD Pipers played "Amazing Grace." The Mets and Braves players shook hands and hugged each other before taking the field.

A joint color guard — comprised of the NYPD, FDNY, EMS, Port Authority Police and state court officers — left lumps in the throats of spectators when they walked on the field.

Liza Minnelli led a seventh-inning-stretch sing-a-long of "New York, New York."

It was no ordinary night at the ballpark.

An army of cops patrolled on horseback and foot. Bomb-sniffing dogs inspected the stadium, and guards checked bags. The measures meant long lines outside the stadium, prompting a delay of the start of the game.

Fans like Marlene Faso, 36, of Montclair, N.J., didn't seem to mind. She held a sign reading, "Baseball Helps Us Heal."

"I really want to know what John Rocker thinks of the people of New York now," she said of the ex-Braves pitcher, infamous for his offensive remarks about New Yorkers. "After this week, what could he say? Nothing."

CITY_21MC100_011829817

NYC-WTC_000412474