



Return to
A Short
Baseball
Return to
NY/Penn League



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Brooklyn Cyclones

New York-Penn League

Baseball Blows Back Into Brooklyn

The Cyclones Deliver A Little Ballyard Magic Back To Brooklyn in Their Inaugural Home Opener in a Squeaker Over the Scrappers.

Will Swarts

Brooklyn - 06/2601 - On a warm, windy summer night, suffused with sentiment and a whiff of carefully marketed nostalgia, baseball returned to Brooklyn.

The much-awaited home opener of the Brooklyn Cyclones saw the New York-Penn League Short-Season Class A affiliate of the New York Mets snatch a come-from-behind 3-2 win over the Mahoning Valley Scrappers, the Cleveland Indians' farm team.

The game was the inaugural at Keyspan Park, a \$39 million boutique ballyard that is part of a \$100 million dollar economic redevelopment project in Brooklyn and Staten Island.

Opening Day Squeaker

A brisk wind, coming in past the defunct Parachute Jump, a landmark feature of the shorefront amusement park, prompted one fan to dub Keyspan Park "Candlestick East."

The game's earliest innings belonged to the starting pitchers, who used the wind to their advantage. Nineteen-year-old Matthew Peterson allowed only three hits over his five-inning tour. Scrappy Scrapper Luke Field kept the Cyclones hitless until Arias rapped out a single with two outs in the third inning.

Down 2-0 in the bottom of the ninth inning with a runner on first, the Cyclones were poised to lose their first game. Then, Cyclones third baseman Edgar Rodriguez clouted a 1-1 fastball off of the Scrappers' reliever Mark Turnbow. The ball soared over the left-field wall, tying the game. The sold-out crowd of 7,500 roared.

An inning later, with the bases loaded in the bottom of the 10th, catcher Michael Jacobs socked a fastball to left field, far enough for second baseman Leandro Arias to score the winning run.

Nate Fernly, who pitched in the 10th for the Scrappers, was gifted the loss, his second of the 76-game season. The win went to Cyclones reliever David Byard, who dodged a bullet when Scrappers designated hitter Rob Morton ended the 10th with a double play, the Cyclones' second of the game.

A Game For The Record Books

It may have been the most closely watched game ever played in Class A. ESPN interviewed hitting coach Howard Johnson, a veteran of the 1986 championship Mets. In what has to be a record for New York-Penn League ball, 300 reporters showed up to watch the Cyclones' debut.

For players with more than a season in the short A, it was a rare evening in the national spotlight.

"I'm used to playing in front of 1,000 people - if we're lucky," Jacobs said. "There's no way I'd want to pitch in front of all these people."

Manager Edgar Alfonzo, besieged by reporters in the dugout, smiled after the successful debut.

"It's an exciting way to win a home game," he said.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani led a trio of dignitaries tossing ceremonial first pitches to celebrity catchers. He was joined by owners Fred and Jeff Wilpon, whose family is angling for full control of the Mets, and by former Brooklyn Dodgers Joe Pignatano and Ralph Branca.



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Branca threw the 1954 playoff homer to Bobby Thomson that gave the New York Giants the pennant that year.

Lifelong Brooklynite David Diamond, 77, an avowed Brooklyn Dodgers fan, said baseball was baseball – “always good.” He did note that crowds at his beloved Ebbets Field had a different dress standard. “When people came to the baseball game, they got dressed up in suits – jackets and ties,” Diamond tells MLN. T-shirts were the order of the day for Cyclones fans.

“The myth and nostalgia is great,” said Seth Slade, a paralegal from the Park Slope neighborhood. “But most of the people here weren’t alive when baseball was still in Brooklyn.”

Fans were lined up outside the two-story souvenir shop throughout the game, buying new Cyclones gear to bring to future games, and show off in the neighborhood.

Mayor Giuliani, speaking on the field after the game, was ready with his sound bites. “The Dodgers left Brooklyn on a loss, and the Cyclones arrived on a win,” the Mayor said.

The Cyclones and Keyspan are envisioned as an anchor of redevelopment for Coney Island, a neighborhood best known for its amusement parks, but little else in the way of commercial real estate. The city will sink in \$100 million for both Keyspan and a new facility for the Staten Island Yanks, another short-season A team.

Giuliani responded to critics who asked whether 38 home games could bring about an economic rebirth. “This is economic impact,” he said of the lines snaking out of the gift shop. “It’s called spending money. There was more money spent [here] tonight than in the last 50 years in Coney Island.”

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