

Baseball

Author takes both sides in Cubs-Cardinals rivalry

Mark Stang compiles 100 years of photos for books on each team

By JENNIFER TOWERS
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Mark Stang has never been to Peoria, but he knows this much is basically true:

"Everyone up there is either a Cubs fan or a Cardinals fan," he said from his home near Cincinnati. "You're always one or the other, and you're never both."



Mark Stang

So Stang, 41, the author of the newly released book, "Cardinals Collection: 100 Years of St. Louis Cardinals Images," is taking care not to rile half his potential audience. When he comes to town, he'll also be touting the book he released last year, "Cubs Collection: 100 Years of Chicago Cubs Images."

"It isn't just a Cardinals book signing," he said. "We're making it very clear this is for both books."

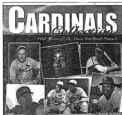
Stang used geography to argue his case as he set up book signings at Barnes & Noble Bookshelters next month in Bloomington and November in Peoria.

"That was my pitch to the girl at Barnes & Noble, who said she didn't know anything about baseball. I said, 'My guess is, you have a lot of Cardinals fans and Cubs fans there,'" he said.

The employee showed Stang's press packet to her boss, who took one look and said, "Book him," Stang said, laughing.

His books are the third and fourth photo collections he has compiled on Midwestern teams, behind tributes to the Cleveland Indians and Cincinnati Reds.

Though Stang considers himself a Reds fan, he's pleased the Cardinals have clinched a playoff



Mark Stang will sign his Cardinals and Cubs books when he comes to Peoria in November.

berth because it will shine more light on his newest book.

Stang cautions there are two things his books are not. They're not books of baseball statistics, and they are not tributes to only the finest players in the game.

"Some of these guys are so obscure their own relatives won't remember them," he said, relating a tale of Dodgers manager Walter Alton's early days. "There's one guy in the Cardinals book. His entire career was one at-bat, and he struck out. But he went on to win four World Series and seven National League pennants as a manager, and that's why he's in there."

Players aren't the only stars of the baseball world.

"We try to mix it up. We also included managers, owners, broadcasters," he said.

The Cardinals book includes a picture of Leo



"Specs" Meadows, the first ballplayer of the 20th century to wear glasses on the field, alongside stars such as Napier Hornsby, Pepper Martin and Mark McGwire. There's also "could-have-been greats" whose careers were cut short by injury or death: 1901 Rookie of the Year Albert Pujols, who played for the Peoria Chiefs; and pitcher Danny Kile, whose death in a Chicago hotel room this past June stunned people far beyond the baseball world.

The Cubs book begins with the famed double-play trio — Tinker, Evers and Chance — detailing how they clicked on the field and how Tinker and Evers despised each other off. It includes other stars of then and now, from Ernie Banks to Greg Maddux and Sammy Sosa. There are detail shots of Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown's picking hand and Hank Wagon's eyes; two female catchers during World War I; Al Capone chatting with Cub-

by Bartlett at a 1901 game; and Guy Bush pumping gas at his off-season job.

Each picture includes four or five paragraphs on the photo subject. Some recap a career, and some focus on an exceptional season or event, not necessarily on the field.

"It's not just about baseball. It's almost a book of personalities, about a lot of really unusual guys who just happen to be baseball players," Stang said.

Each book has more than 200 photographs, many of which were previously unpublished. Much of Stang's research consists of digging through private and public collections of photographs. Once he chooses the pictures, he has to have them professionally restored for publication.

"The early ones, when I first get my hands on them, they look like they've been run over by a truck," he said.

It's his hope even the most knowledgeable fans will be able to read from his book and say, "I didn't know that."

All of the photos, from the oldest to the most recent, are in black and white. That was an editorial decision made for consistency and to help keep the book affordable. When the first book came out, the black-and-white look was quite striking, Stang said.

"If you look at the players of five years ago and the players of 80 years ago, they look the same," he said. "People love that."

Stang enjoys talking baseball at his book signings.

"It's a lot of fun doing these book signings because people are so passionate about their team," he said. "They live and die with their team. And in the case of the Cubs, mostly die. . . ."

Each book costs \$29.95. Stang will be at the Bloomington Barnes & Noble from 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 18 and at the Peoria store from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Nov. 8.

His four photo collections and his first book, a 1,150-page work about the history of baseball player numbers called "Baseball by the Numbers," also are available on-line at amazon.com.