

Kerby's Host CRWS Players

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Our Adventure started off on Sunday, August 8, 2004 when Gabby, my daughter, sang The Star Spangled Banner at Ripken Stadium. The Aberdeen Ironbirds vs. The Vermont Expos. During the game I noticed a sign that Host Families were still needed, but didn't know what that meant. It wasn't till Monday afternoon while I was reading over the game program that it clicked what Host Family meant. I called the number on the program and spoke to Lindsay Thomas who told me that they were still short a family. She emailed me a bunch of attachments to look over. Later that evening I faxed over my application and background checks. Before the evening was over, I received a phone call from Pat Scott welcoming me as a Host Family. She read me the names of the other Host Families and one family I already knew, The Gullions. Everything was moving so quickly; after all, these boys were due to arrive on Wednesday.



Today is the day, Wednesday August 11th; the boys are due to arrive by bus from Philadelphia. We headed over to the ballpark around 2 o'clock. We were greeted by Penny, Janie and several other Ripken volunteers and personnel. They were all so friendly and made us feel at home. We were offered drinks and pizza while we waited for the bus to arrive. Around 2:30pm the boys arrived and received instructions taken. After some award for making it We were now in the of the Series.

The boys were been made by the Moose Lodge. There Joes, potato salad, crabs. After a few back to their Host settle in and fall



from Babe Ruth personnel and had some pictures paperwork was taken care of, the boys were given an to the CRWS and then assigned to their families. care of Zylar Cosby and Ben Pelham for the duration

starving by this time. Arrangements had already Host Families to have a get together at the Aberdeen was plenty of food, which included hot dogs, Sloppy snacks, lots of desserts and even Maryland steamed hours most of the boys were tired and wanted to go Families' homes. It didn't take long for the boys to asleep as they had a long day traveling.

Thursday, a Pool Party Ice Breaker was planned at the Aberdeen Swim Club. It started at 10:30am. We awoke early, had a cold breakfast, as the Pool Party also included a picnic lunch. During the day the kids went swimming, ate hamburgers and hot dogs and the boys played some Ripken Quickball. The coach called a practice around 1:00 o'clock over at the local Middle School, so we packed up our things and headed over there.



Later that evening was the Banquet of Champions from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. The Banquet featuring guest speakers Cal Jr and Bill Ripken was held at the Havre de Grace Community

Center. My husband, Chuck, was able to join us at the





Banquet after he got off from work.

Bill Ripken was the MC for the evening. All the teams were introduced one by one as they headed to their tables. Awards, flowers and recognition were given to the many persons responsible for making the CRWS possible. The Banquet was catered by Outback Steakhouse and included chicken tenders, french-fries, salad and rolls. After a speech from Cal Ripken, Jr the evening came to an end and we all headed back home once again.

Friday morning was yet another early morning as team pictures were to be taken around 9:30am and a Nike Skills Day was planned at Cal Sr's Yard, still under construction and to be a mini replica of Oriole Park at Camden Yards. The teams participated in a Base Running Relay Race, Around the Horn Throwing Relay and a Homerun Derby. After the conclusion of Skills Day, we went to lunch at the Golden Corral and met up with a couple other Host Families and coaches.

Opening Ceremonies were held at Ripken Stadium from 6:30pm – 9:00pm. All the teams were introduced onto the field and each presented with a plaque for their accomplishments. Different members from the Cal Ripken, Babe Ruth and other organizations including members of the Ripken family each presented the awards to the teams. Vi Ripken presented the award to the South Eastern Champs from Kentucky.

Cal and Bill Ripken entertained the crowd by playing a game of

hillbilly horseshoes where they pitched plastic toilet seats onto plungers. It was quite amusing and Cal finally got a ringer beating Bill in the competition.



Bill Ripken jokingly made remarks last evening at the Banquet that whoever gave the most gifts will win the tournament. So a few of our boys walked out on the field and presented Bill with a laundry basket full of goodies. Later in the evening as we were heading for home, each of the boys brought out a wicker laundry basket filled with tons of stuff representing Kentucky and the team and gave one to each of the Host Families. Thank you so much for your kindness.

Saturday our boys were slated for the 1st game against the Middle Atlantic Champions from Montgomery, NJ. Our boys won the opener 11 – 6. Ben hit a 2 run homerun. What a great way to get the series started. After the game, my husband, who joined us for the game, left early to go home and start preparing dinner for us. Both Zyler and Ben's families joined us for a nice dinner on the patio. After sitting around and chatting over a few margaritas with the ladies we decided to go back to the ballpark and take in a few more games. By this time it was starting to drizzle, but decided we wanted to go check it out anyway.

Sunday we had a nice country breakfast of Kentucky ham, scrapple, Kentucky biscuits and gravy and eggs. The boys tried scrapple, but didn't care for it. We headed off for practice and then to another pool party as this was our first day off. Nellie and Bob Manning, one of the other Host Families planned a pool party for the team. The team enjoyed a day full of swimming and lots of great food. After the pool party, most of the players headed back to the stadium to take in some more games.

Monday morning we had a Maryland style breakfast of potatoes, eggs and cheese. After breakfast the boys and I took in some Harford County sites, including a drive by Cal Jr.'s house and the Mason Dixon line. By 8 o'clock it was time to head back to the stadium for this evenings game We were playing the Harford County Rep from Churchville,



Maryland. The boys slaughtered that team 10 – 0 in four innings. After the game several of us stood in line to get autographs and pictures with Cal Ripken, Jr.

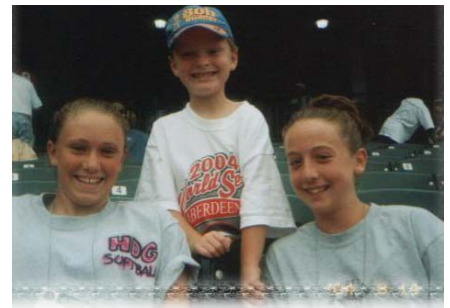
Tuesday we had an afternoon game scheduled for 3 o'clock against Southeast Region from Raleigh, NC. The boys took their first loss 1 – 2 against Raleigh. It was a good game and all the boys played well but the boys took the loss hard. They are now 2 – 1 for the pool play. After the game, the team was scheduled to go to a Baltimore Orioles game at Oriole Park at Camden Yards. The boys and several host families all boarded a bus around 5:30pm and headed for the game. Unfortunately the O's lost.

Wednesday was our last scheduled day off and I needed to go school clothes shopping for my kids as they start school on August 30th. Ben and Zylar spent the day with mom Nancy and dad Aaron down in Baltimore checking out the ESPN Zone and touring some of Baltimore's ships. We met back up at Cal Sr's Yard as the boys had a practice at 6:30pm.

Thursday the team had a live radio show to be aired back in Kentucky so we had to be at the stadium at 8:45am. I got the boys up around 7am and we went to the Churchville McDonalds for breakfast. Bill Ripken was present for the radio show and signed autographs for several of us as he left the stadium. After the radio show we had to be back for practice at 1:00 o'clock. Today's game was scheduled for 3 o'clock against the Midwest Plains Region from Waite Park, MN. The final score was 12 – 3. This was another big win for our Ohio Valley Region boys. They are now on their way to single elimination play. The boys split up and went out with their parents for dinner, while the kids and I went spent some time with their dad.

Friday we finally had a chance to sleep in a little. The team was up against undefeated Pacific Southwest team of Oahu, Hawaii. I dropped the boys off for practice then headed out to let Gabby spend some time with her grandma. Chaz and I came back to watch the boys play ball. The team played incredible ball. However they took a very hard loss of 3-2 against Hawaii for their final game. After the coaches talked to the team and parents, arrangements were made for the boys to return to their own families and teammates. Zylar and family came back to our house to pick up his things and say good-bye and Nancy came to pick up Ben's suitcase.

Just can't get enough baseball! After ten long days and nights of baseball, Saturday, Chaz and I headed over to the stadium to catch a little of the US Championship game. Chaz wandered around and flirted with all the girlfriends he made over the past two weeks. Turns out that one of the girls he made friends with is Mariah Ripken, a niece of Cal and Bill's. She was an Ambassador for another team along with her friend Taylor. We met Mariah for the first time when she and her mom sat behind us during an Ironbird game two weeks earlier. Chaz also made friends with Heather, from the Ironbirds staff Stephanie from the Cal Ripken, Sr Foundation. I guess I have to keep my eye on him as he gets older. During our visit to the park, four of the five Host Families in our group were interviewed by a local reporter from the Aegis.



Sunday was the World Series. Chaz, Gabby and I took in the Mexico vs. West Raleigh game together. as Maryland's Governor, Robert Erhlich threw out the first pitch. Mexico beat West Raleigh 4-3. What a good game that started out to be. You could definitely see the fight in those Mexico boys' attitudes. It was such a close game. After the game, as the crowd was thinning, Cal came onto the field and of course the crowd gathered. Apparently he wasn't going to sign autographs, but ended up doing so anyway.

It was such a pleasure to share in the experience of the CRWS. I know how hard it must have been for the families of the players to let your children stay with a family they had never met before. I can't wait to see some of their faces in the years to come on their very own baseball cards.

By: Debbie Kerby
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The Kerby's