



Monday, September 19, 2011
Updated: September 20, 11:35 AM ET

Beyond bobbleheads

By Patrick Cain
ESPN The Magazine

This story appears in the Oct. 3, 2011, issue of ESPN The Magazine.

Sausage races? Bobbleheads? Free scorecards? When it comes to putting butts in the seats, big league clubs are strictly bush league



compared with

Fuzzy green monsters and fancy 'staches? The minor leagues have it all.

their minor league counterparts. In The Mag's 10th annual Veeck Awards -- named after the late, great baseball owner and showman Bill Veeck -- we honor this year's most memorable promotions from the game's lower levels.

BEST EXPLOITATION OF A FAD

WINNER: Salt Lake (Utah) Bees (Angels, Triple-A)

PROMO: The season-long promotion Angry Bees had contestants launching toy bees from giant slingshots in an attempt to knock over bobblehead dolls.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH: "Every so often our promo team members got drilled by an errant bee," says Chance Fessler, the Bees' director of game operations. "The crowd loved that."

BEST 'STACHE APPRECIATION

WINNER: Bowie (Md.) Baysox (Orioles, Double-A)

PROMO: For Mustache Mania, fans celebrated the boys of summer by showcasing tufts beneath their noses.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH: "Practically anybody can grow a beard for Beardapalooza," says Chris Rogers, Baysox promotions manager. "But mustaches take time and effort to perfect and display."

BEST PROJECTILE

WINNER: Lowell (Mass.) Spinners (Red Sox, Short-Season Class-A)

PROMO: In the Human Home Run, the Spinners shot David "Cannonball" Smith Sr., a human cannonball vet (he's done this more than 9,000 times), over the outfield wall from just beyond second base.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH: "Other people are taking our idea and adapting it," says Jon Goode, a spokesman for the Spinners. "Smith has already been contacted to do a human field goal for an arena football team."

BEST USE OF AN ANIMAL

WINNER: Mobile (Ala.) BayBears (Diamondbacks, Double-A)

PROMO: Whiplash, a white-headed capuchin monkey dressed as a cowboy, herded sheep on the field while riding a border collie.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH: "He's a famous little monkey!" says Wayne Randazzo, the BayBears' play-by-play announcer. "He's been in Taco John's and Dairy Queen commercials."

BEST BLAST FROM THE PAST

WINNER: Lakewood (N.J.) BlueClaws (Phillies, Class-A)

PROMO: The BlueClaws hosted the Foreign Legion, the dastardly 1980s wrestling duo of Iron Sheik and Nikolai Volkoff, to sign autographs and take photos with fans.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH: Hal Hansen, the BlueClaws' director of promotions, says that after two hours, the Sheik's representative told him, "The Sheik is starting to get agitated." Hansen's response? "We had him out of there within 90 seconds."

PROMO OF THE YEAR: BEST WASTE OF AN ENTIRELY GOOD DAY

WINNER: West Michigan Whitecaps (Tigers, Class-A)

PROMO: When NPR reported that April 11, 1954, was the most boring day in the 20th century, the Whitecaps decided to honor that unmomentous day with the 57th Anniversary of Most Boring Day in History.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH: "I was worried it wasn't going to be boring," says Mickey Graham, director of marketing for the Whitecaps. "But it was a 3-1 loss to the Great Lake Loons, so it was boring enough. I'd like to say thank you to the fans who came. We hope you didn't have fun."

Follow The Mag on Twitter: @[ESPNmag](https://twitter.com/ESPNmag).
