



Collin's Corner

Major Leagues' First Night Opening Game

by Lee Collin
April 2003

Sportsman's Park in St. Louis was the setting for Major League Baseball's first opening night game.

A crowd of 20,871 saw the Cardinals host the Pittsburgh Pirates on a damp, cool night, April 15, 1950. The first night regular season game had been played nearly fifteen years earlier on May 24, 1935 at Crosley Field in Cincinnati, and by 1950 lights were the norm in big league ballparks. Night games were popular with the fans and successful for the owners. But the opening day game at the ballpark had always been played in daylight.

St. Louis second baseman Red Schoendienst tagged a fastball for a homer off Pirates right-hander Bob Chesnes in the bottom of the 1st inning to give the Cardinals a 1 – 0 lead. A solo shot in the right field pavilion by Stan Musial in the 3rd made it 2 – 0, St. Louis.

Pittsburgh jumped on the Cards' starter Gerry Staley in the top of the 6th. After Pirates catcher Ed Fitzgerald doubled, Staley walked opposing pitcher Chesnes. After a sacrifice advanced the runners to second and third, Bucs first baseman Johnny Hopp chased home both runners with a single to left to tie the score, 2 – 2.

In the Cardinals' half of the 6th, Eddie Kazak singled, was sacrificed to second and scored on Joe Garagiola's single to put the Card back on top, 3 – 2. St. Louis added an insurance run in the 7th on consecutive singles by Schoendienst, Musial and Enos Slaughter, to make it a 4 – 2 victory for the Cardinals in baseball's first-ever opener under the lights.

Taking part in the game were four future Hall of Famers: Ralph Kiner of Pittsburgh and Stan Musial, Red Schoendienst, and Enos Slaughter of St. Louis.

Sportsman's Park											
St. Louis											
April 18, 1950											
Pittsburgh	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	--	2
St. Louis	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	x	--	4
WP – Staley	LP – Chesnes			Attendance: 20,871							

This article originally appeared in the April 2003 issue of The Bleacher Creature.

Copyright © 2003 by Lee Collin. All Rights Reserved.

Lee Collin
3508 Charles Drive
Chalmette, LA 79943