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Monday, April 7, 2008

## Tigers score with promos

Team's giveaways among best this year, not worst, in UDM professor's study

Jennifer Youssef / The Detroit News

A lineup that includes a Justin Verlander no-hitter DVD, a 1968 World Champions replica road jersey, Motown Night and the 14th annual Negro League Tribute [Game](#) has propelled the Detroit Tigers from worst to best in ballpark giveaways and promotions this season, according to a University of Detroit Mercy marketing professor.

Last year, Mike Bernacchi ranked the Tigers giveaways at the bottom among Major League Baseball teams, where they'd hovered ever since 1993 when the [marketing](#) professor began his annual reviews of the teams' promotion schedules for the season.

But, in a turnaround that mirrors the makeover of the team roster, the promotions for the fans in the stands this year leaped to new Tigers' heights, in Bernacchi's view, because they are unique and meaningful.

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"It is amazing," said Bernacchi, who reports his findings in an informal newsletter. "This is the first time in 15 years they stepped up to the plate."

In the Tigers' company at the top are the White Sox, Rays and Marlins. Ranking at the bottom are the Red Sox (that team doesn't bother to post promotion schedules, Bernacchi said), the Yankees and Mets.

Though the giveaways aren't the main draw for most fans, "they can be a big factor in attendance," said Rob Matwick, Tigers vice president of communications. "A lot of times, promos can drive attendance on slower days," he said, adding that it's something the team tries to improve upon every year.

The promotions department is taking advantage of the heightened interest in the team, the individual players' popularity and great performances like Verlander's no-hitter last season, Matwick said. When a fan feels connected to the player or the entire team, they are more likely to cherish a promotional item.

"The players are our product," Matwick said, and a giveaway is a "link to the product we can put in fans' hands to connect them with the players."

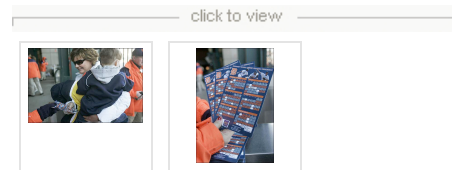
### Promotions a tradition

Major League Baseball has a long-standing tradition of sending fans home with a small keepsake, Bernacchi said.

"It's part of the ambience of the MLB," he said. "Each team has 81 chances (at home games) to make an impression. If they don't take advantage of promos, they're insane."



Jess Terburgh, holding her 4-year-old son, Eli, takes a Tigers schedule on a refrigerator magnet before Thursday's game. (John T. Greilick / The Detroit News)



### More information

#### Best giveaways

Michael Bernacchi, a marketing professor at the University of Detroit Mercy, has ranked the quality of the game giveaways and promotions of the Major League Baseball teams for 15 years. Here's how he rated this year's promotions:

#### Best

#### American League National League

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Chicago        | Atlanta      |
| <b>Detroit</b> | Florida      |
| Tampa Bay      | Philadelphia |
| Texas          | Pittsburgh   |

#### Worst

The teams that do it right, according to the marketing professor, are those that make their giveaways and special events appealing, meaningful and varied. Before this year, he said, the Tigers' offerings were usually the opposite -- repetitive and non-original, like fireworks every Friday and Saturday and Kids Run the Bases on Sunday.

Among the promotions that Bernacchi says stand out this year at Comerica Park are a Careers in Pro [Sports](#) Day on April 24, when club executives and staff will talk to local students about their jobs with the team. The event will open the eyes of children about the job opportunities in the sports industry, for those who might not have what it takes to be a player, he said.

Such engaging promotions -- of interest to fans of all ages, races and ethnicities -- will get people to the game, he said.

"This year, more than ever, the Tigers have embraced this. They may not win all the time, but you can still take the memory of the game with you."

### Giveaways 'a good idea'

Taylor Weinhardt, a 24-year-old waiter from Detroit, thinks the giveaways are "a good idea." An exceptional one will get his attention.

"If I'm going to the game anyway, I'd be sure to get there a lot earlier," he said.

Cathi Daly of Taylor, 55, doesn't give much thought to the promotional items. The die-hard Tigers fan goes to the park to enjoy the game and root for her favorite baseball team, she said.

"But it is nice to have something to take home," Daly said. "For the cost of a ticket, you should get to keep something."

Besides, her 32-year-old daughter, Amy Leighton, said, "Who wouldn't want a free thing?"

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#### American League National League

Boston	Colorado
New York	Los Angeles
Oakland	Washington

Sources: [Mike Bernacchi](#), [Mike Barone](#)

#### Tigers promotion highlights

**Magglio Ordoñez American League batting title mini-bats: April 14, vs. Twins.** The first 10,000 fans will receive a bat to recognize Ordoñez winning the 2007 batting title with a .363 batting average. Ordoñez was the ninth Tigers player to win the American League batting title and the first since Norm Cash in 1961.

**Justin Verlander no-hitter DVDs: April 15, vs. Twins.** The first 10,000 fans will get a DVD of Justin Verlander's no-hitter against the Milwaukee Brewers on June 12, 2007. The DVD will feature the FSN Detroit game telecast called by Mario Impemba and Rod Allen.

**Curtis Granderson bobbleheads: May 20, vs. Mariners,** to first 10,000 fans

**Placido Polanco replica Gold Gloves: May 25, vs. Twins.** To first 7,500 kids 14 and younger. The replica glove recognizes Polanco's 2007 Rawlings Gold Glove Award at second base.

**1968 World Champions replica road jerseys: June 24, vs. Cardinals.** To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the club's 1968 World Championship, the first 10,000 fans will receive a replica of the team's road jerseys from that season.

**Miguel Cabrera bobbleheads: Sept. 3, vs. Angels,** to first 10,000 fans

**Annual Negro Leagues Weekend Celebration: July 25-26, vs. White Sox**

**Fiesta Tigres!: Aug. 9, vs. Athletics**  
**Fan Appreciation Weekend: Sept. 26-28, vs. Rays.**

**Friday fireworks: May 9 through Sept. 26**

**Saturday fireworks: May 24 through Sept. 27 (except for June 7, June 14 and July 12)**

**Kids Run the Bases: Every Sunday, weather permitting**

Source: [detroit.tigers.mlb.com](http://detroit.tigers.mlb.com)

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