

San Diego 6

L.A. Dodgers 3



FINAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
Padres	0	0	0	2	3	0	1	0	0	6		
Dodgers	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3		



Major leagues ready to put China on baseball itinerary again

BEIJING (AP) -Almost everyone is ready to play more baseball in China. Whether they want to eat more Chinese food in Beijing - particularly some exotic offerings - is another matter.

"Some of the things were very different and not my style of food," San Diego Padres third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff said Sunday, when his team beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 6-3 in the second of a two-game exhibition series - the first major league games in China.

Josh Geer earned the win and Scott Hairston hit a go-ahead, two-run double to help the Padres overcome a three-run deficit.

Chinese fans struggled to understand baseball, cheering foul balls and sitting silently for a seventh-inning chorus of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." For Kouzmanoff, the trials came choking down a few delicacies.

He sampled silk worm in a street-side market, something called a sea scorpion and snake. He said he passed on kabobs of cow stomach, sea urchin, star fish and sea horse.

"It was pretty gross," said Kouzmanoff, who paid \$5 for the three-course meal. "I think the taste was better than the smell. The snake was extremely rubbery. It was like chewing on a rubber band."

Saturday's opener ended in a 3-3 tie after nine innings, not unusual for a preseason game. Sunday's game drew a near-sellout crowd of 11,890 to the new Olympic baseball venue in west Beijing, down slightly from 12,224 the previous day.

Both had the feel of games played almost anywhere in America - perhaps in a minor league park - with hot dogs and peanuts selling briskly and vendors hawking beer and soft drinks at bargain prices. Some vendors even wore shirts patterned after the Texas flag. Dodgers and Padres caps were offered at U.S. prices, and tickets ranged from 50 yuan (\$7) to 1,280 yuan (\$180).

"I would love to come back," Los Angeles Dodgers chairman Frank McCourt said. "I feel we would be making a mistake if we felt that by playing these exhibition games the job was done. The job has just begun."

Asked if China might host a regular-season game, McCourt replied: "Yes, no question about it. But Major League Baseball at the highest level is going to have to sort through that because there are a lot of logistics involved in doing that."

Baseball gave China its best pitch. The between-innings atmosphere offered thumping music, cheerleaders and the Padres' mascot "The Swinging Friar." The Dodgers' Taiwanese shortstop, Chin-lung Hu, seemed nervous Saturday but made some eye-popping defensive plays on Sunday. Even the field - hard and quick - drew raves. The distances down the lines were 320 feet, and dead center was 400.

History was made, no doubt. The first ball used in Saturday's game will go into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

"The guys were saying the field was at least as good as facilities back in Florida or Arizona," said Murray Cook, in charge of MLB's international field preparations.

Youth choirs sang both anthems as Chinese and U.S. flags waved in a brisk breeze in deep left field. Several hundred Chinese journalists covered the games. However, the games weren't on local TV, though both were telecast live in San Diego and Los Angeles.

The games were a preview of this summer's Olympics, where baseball also must grab attention. The new venue is expected to be razed after the Olympics to build a shopping mall and apartments.

Baseball has been voted out of the 2012 Olympics in London - partially because MLB has not released its players to participate - but could be reinstated by the Europe-based International Olympic Committee in time for 2016.

The trip to China cost MLB several million, all aimed at getting a foothold among the country's swelling middle class, which is open to foreign products and trends. Baseball also needs to reach the grass roots. The game is only played by an estimated 100,000 in a country of 1.3 billion.

"Hopefully, we started something that is going to be a regular thing," Dodgers manager Joe Torre said. "I'm been impressed with everything that's gone on here, except for the traffic. We had a little taste of this in New York and L.A., but it's pretty unique here."

Asked if it was worse in Beijing, Torre replied: "I think so."

The Dodgers took a 1-0 lead in the first inning on Matt Kemp's sacrifice fly. His two-out, two-run single in the third made it 3-0. The Padres closed to 3-2 in the fourth when Kouzmanoff hit an RBI double before Matt Antonelli grounded into a run-scoring double play.

Hairston's two-run double and an error by left fielder George Lombard put the Padres ahead 5-3 in the fifth. They added another run in the seventh.

Baseball traces its roots in China back to 1863 when, according to MLB research, an American named Henry William Boone formed the Shanghai Baseball Club. But the game hasn't grown roots, similar to cricket in the United States. The U.S. hosted the first international cricket match in 1844, and it was downhill from there.

"I can't predict what will happen," Padres closer Trevor Hoffman said. "I don't think anybody can pull out the crystal ball and make a prediction. But I think to have something like this get to this stage is an achievement. They probably didn't think this was going to happen five years ago."

Added Dodgers general manager Ned Colletti: "I think it will take days, weeks, months before it really sinks in how grand this has been. Hopefully it's just a footprint at the beginning of a long journey."

Short of cultivating young talent, MLB needs to find a superstar in China. And basketball, of course, is the model.

"The big difference is going to be when somebody from China makes it to the majors, like Yao Ming," Dodgers outfielder Andruw Jones said. "When the major leagues get a Chinese guy that can expose baseball in China, I think that's going to make a big difference."