

## The RoundHouse

April 10, 2021

### RH: "Those Are the Games You Live For."

By Paul Suellentrop, Senior Communicator



After a year of sports canceled, delayed or diminished, baseball got its big day in Wichita and did not disappoint.

People eating, drinking and tailgating downtown and in Delano on their way to the new stadium. Packed stands. Cheering, clapping fans. Ballpark food and Shocker shirts, hats and face coverings.

Riverfront Stadium made its debut, postponed a year by the pandemic, and Wichita State baseball, sunny weather and a 10-1 win over Houston turned Saturday's game into an event that the city's sports fans will treasure.

"Great atmosphere," said Ricky Lamb, a Wichita State alum. "I'm a baseball guy and happy to have baseball back downtown. The potential is unlimited."

The stadium drew fans – 7,509 to rank No. 7 on Wichita State's list of home games – and lived up to its role as the star. The \$90-million stadium, built for Triple-A baseball, is home to Wichita Wind Surge, the Double-A affiliate of the Minnesota Twins. The Wind Surge opens the season at home on May 11.

For a soft opening, they invited a lot of Shocker fans to enjoy the wide concourses, roomy seats, public art, sky boxes and view of downtown. Lawrence-Dumont Stadium, the city's home for baseball from 1934-2018, had the view, but lacked the modern amenities fans expect.

"I love it," said Eddy Brotemarkle, a Wichita State alum. "Over the past year, everybody is craving that normalcy. Having a facility like this, brand new, good family friendly environment to be around – it's a big positive for the city."

Wichita State and the Wind Surge started talking about this possibility in 2019. The Shockers, like the men's basketball team at Intrust Bank Arena, wants to play an annual game at Riverfront and jumped at the chance to open the stadium. The Wind Surge benefits from partnering with the Shockers and getting 7,509 potential customers into the stadium and handing those fans schedules on their way out.

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[Paxton Wallace](#) crushes it to right-center for the first ever home run in Riverfront Stadium.

Put it in the Louvre... [pic.twitter.com/qy9WYLorvF](https://pic.twitter.com/qy9WYLorvF)

— Wichita State Baseball (@GoShockersBSB) [April 10, 2021](#)

"Very impressed," said Wichitan Damon Rugg. "This will spark more Delano business and probably get a more diverse social scene, bars, restaurants, than they have down here. If they keep doing it right, people will come and have a good time."

The Shockers haven't played to that kind of crowd since the 2007 NCAA super regional at Eck Stadium. In addition to the significance of playing the first game, the Shockers got a chance to show off for fans who drifted away in recent seasons. With each game, they are giving Shocker fans more of a reason to pay attention.

Wichita State (18-9, 6-1 American Athletic Conference) won its sixth straight game and 10th in its past 11. That buzz can help return some of the buzz to Eck Stadium and Saturday's game made a good sales pitch.

The Shockers return to Eck Stadium to try and sweep the Cougars (13-17, 1-6) at 11 a.m., Sunday.

"I love the fans of Wichita and the fact they showed up today," coach [Eric Wedge](#) said. "It's always a little bit more meaningful when you're playing in front of your fans and they pack the stadium."

Freshman pitcher [Jace Kaminska](#) gave six hits and struck out seven to throw Wichita State's first complete game since 2019. Kaminska, from Caney, started his first game against Kansas State and won. He started his first conference game on the road and won at Houston. Saturday, the stage got even bigger.

"They were telling me all week there was going to be 7,000 people and I didn't believe it," he said. "It was awesome. Towards the end, when they were getting real loud when I came out for the ninth, it really helped finish it."

Third baseman [Paxton Wallace](#) hit a two-run home run in the first inning.

"It was the best feeling ever, especially when the place erupted," Wallace said. "Those are the games you live for."

Designated hitter [Hunter Gibson](#) hit a grand slam in the fifth. The defense sparked, especially in contrast to Houston's clumsy fielding, with two double plays and all the routine ones.

On Saturday, sports looked more normal than in a long time. Shocker baseball and Riverfront Stadium did their part in a big way.

*[Paul Suellentrop](#) covers Wichita State Athletics and the American Athletic Conference for university Strategic Communications. Story suggestion? Contact him at [paul.suellentrop@wichita.edu](mailto:paul.suellentrop@wichita.edu).*