

Big 12 baseball tournament ha

I spent the last four days at the inaugural Big 12 Conference baseball tournament at All-Sports Stadium in Oklahoma City. It was epic, with more than 30 home runs and 50 doubles being hit in the 11 games played. The tournament finally ended at 11:07 p.m. Sunday when Oklahoma outslugged regular-season champion Texas Tech 19-17 for the championship.

I already knew that I enjoyed college baseball more than professional baseball before I ventured to Oklahoma City. After all, I've seen my share of Tech games over the past few years. But this weekend proved it to me even more.

The thing I like about college ball is the crowd. You get true college fans who really care whether their team wins or loses. And they're very vocal, sometimes to the point of being obnoxious. But it's all part of the game. It's what makes it so exciting.

One of my favorite groups of fans is an assemblage that I simply call "the hecklers," even though I'm sure they have a better name for their group than that.

The talkative team, led by former Tech student Chris Sneed, has been doing their thing at Red Raider games for years, but their reputation has really grown over the past cou-



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ple of seasons. They are so popular in Lubbock that a restaurant now sponsors them. Well, at least they give them free t-shirts to wear.

Sneed, who claims not to be able to play a lick of baseball, also has a book published called "The Bleacher Bible: The True Fan's Guide to Better Heckling." In the book, Sneed explains more about why he and his buddies do what they do.

"Heckling, at it's best, is a form of art," he explains. "The object of heckling is to get the players on the field to think of you more than they're thinking about the game."

His book is widely successful in Lubbock. He used to keep some of his best lines in a personal book that he would take to the games. "Everyone told me that I should get it published, so I did," he said.

Sneed and the others (around 8-10 people) made the trip to the conference tournament as well. I had a chance to talk with him about his "art form" and listen to his gang in action. Here are some of the best lines that I (and everyone else in the stadium) heard during the tournament.

- When OU's Casey Bookout (who weighs around 250 lbs.) was batting: "Hey Casey, there's a hamburger at first base."

- To other hefty players: "I could stay in shape by running laps around your waist," or "You're pullin' the moon out of orbit."

- When the pitcher makes more than three throws to first base to try and pick off a baserunner: "Hey pitcher, turn your blinker off."

- To short guys: "Did you get on the wrong bus this morning? Maybe you should be at the museum with the other fourth graders," or "Who made your uniform ... Garanimals?"

- To leadmouths on the bench: "You've been sittin the bench so long your teammates call you judge."

- To bad fielding teams: "Your infield has more holes than a porcupine's underwear."

- To bad teams: "You guys took

and everything, even hecklers

bating practice earlier and the pitching machine threw a no-hitter."

They do other things as well. Chris brings his own xylophone to play "Charge." They were also giving out honorary scholarships to any other fan who was heckling Tech players and coaches for their recent admission that they exceeded the NCAA scholarship limit.

Everything is done in fun. In Sneed's book, he has a list of commandments to follow. Among the rules is never use profanity and never, ever insult a player's mother.

Most of the opposing players and coaches seem to get a kick out of the antics, Sneed said, but one coach didn't. When Oklahoma State came to Lubbock earlier this year and lost two of three games, Cowboy coach Tom Holliday was quoted as saying that "these guys are a disgrace to the Big 12." Of course, this is the same guy who bodyslammed one of his players into the dugout wall Thursday night for talking back to him, so he's one to talk.

"Most people seem to get a kick out of it," Sneed told me Friday night. "I guess Holliday didn't."

If you want to be a better heckler, you can get a copy of "The Bleacher

Bible" by calling Sneed at (806) 795-4923.

As for Sneed's favorite line of all time, he said it was spoken by someone else. "Back in 1991, we were playing Air Force and their pitcher threw the first pitch about halfway up the screen behind home plate. Then, some guy yelled out 'aim high Air Force.' I thought that was pretty funny."