

National Guardsmen honored on Cubs' Opening Day



By [Harry Porterfield](#)

April 8, 2005 — Baseball is back at the Friendly Confines. The Cubs opened their home season Friday against the Milwaukee Brewers. Former Cubs second baseman Ryne Sandberg threw out the ceremonial first pitch for the game

Before the first pitch, some local National Guardsmen took part in the pre-game ceremony. Their unit served in Iraq. One of the guardsmen was particularly excited about his role in the day's festivities.

One year ago these members of the National Guard's 202 Air Defense Artillery Unit based in Galva were unceremoniously patrolling the road leading to the Baghdad airport. Returning in March, six members of the unit were honored as color guards at the Cubs pre-game ceremonies on this the team's opening day in Chicago.

"For months we looked forward to getting back on American soil, but never in my life had I figured that American soil would be right here in Wrigley Field," said Sgt. Mark Stach, National Guardsman.

Although the unit survived its tour of duty in Iraq without a single fatality, there were injuries and the guardsmen arrived home having earned 30 Purple Hearts.

Three of those injured were members of the honor guard. Specialist Bill McDaniels was injured in April 2004.

"We were caught up in an ambush. We got hit by 2 RPGs. It blew the front of my truck out blew the windshield all into my face," said McDaniels, wounded guardsman.

"I feel great...this is the one place i want to be right now ..on the planet..Wrigley Field...Friendly Confines..couldn't ask for anything better," said Todd Kavran, wounded guardsman.

"This is a dream come true just to be here on opening day being a color guard. its doesn't get any better ...its a great feeling," said Justin Squires, wounded guardsman.

In Iraq, a big 'W' was displayed when the Cubs won. There's another one for when they lost. That one was left behind today

You can see the ABC7 report by clicking on the video icon above. You will need Windows Media Player 9 or higher to view this video. You can get it [FREE by clicking here](#). **NOTE: Video clips will only be available for 5-days from the date they were created. ALSO: Video clips will play in a separate window on Mac OS X machines, you may also see a video help screen.**



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