

# TORONTO STAR

INCREASINGLY CLOUDY. HIGH 1 C ★ WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2002 ★ thestar.com ★ METRO EDITION

## Blood stains to team mascots, this trade show has it all

**Baseball owners can shop and save Plus counselling services for players**

GEOFF BAKER  
SPORTS REPORTER

NASHVILLE, TENN.—Still trying to get those bloodstains off your team's uniforms after its last bench-clearing brawl? No problem.

That shortstop from the sandlots of Venezuela having trouble cashing his latest six-figure cheque? There is a solution.

How about deciding on the best way to turn 50,000 well-behaved fans into crazed noisemakers in time for that next playoff game? Or replacing that outdated mascot now that you've changed the name of the minor-league team you recently purchased?

Those are some of the reasons baseball team owners and executives turn up at the annual Baseball Trade Show, run in conjunction with the winter meetings.

Teams won't always get the player deals they want at the meetings taking place upstairs, but the dozens of exhibit booths — featuring baseball items ranging from the very basic to highly obscure — ensure they can at least go home with something they need.

"I don't want to brag, but there's nobody else in the country that does what we do," said Brad Singer, vice-president of New Jersey-based EISCO, a family-run, janitorial supply company that guarantees it can get the blood out of any baseball uniform.

"There is a need for these things," Singer said, showing off a table of cleaning products that do everything from getting pine

tar off bats to keeping batting helmets shiny. "Somebody has to do it and that somebody is us."

Singer has contracts with the clubhouse managers of dozens of major and minor-league teams, including Jeff Ross of the Blue Jays. For packages ranging

*'There is a need for these things. Somebody has to do it and that somebody is us.'*

Brad Singer, on getting blood and grass stains out of baseball uniforms

from \$100 to \$1,000 (all figures U.S.), the company provides a year's worth of cleaning supplies, including something called Protein Release, which Singer says will remove all blood and "any grass stains" from uniforms.

There are booths at the show catering to more obvious baseball needs. Some companies put

the latest techniques in computerized ticketing on display, while others offered scoreboards ranging from \$5,000 to millions of dollars.

"We get people who are planning a renovation, or who want to build a new stadium," said Burlington resident Jim Mitchell, president of the scoreboard-building company HDD, which sells products in the United States under the Team Media name.

Mitchell's most recent baseball clients included the Tulsa Drillers minor-league team.

"They come to us here several months ahead of time and we'll show them what they can get for a certain price," said Mitchell, whose display at the show included an overhanging scoreboard tallying runs scored by the "Jays."

But other products at the show were far more obscure.

A large sign above Becky Schnakenberg's display booth boasted: "We make your players smarter." Schnakenberg's specialty is offering counselling services in Spanish to players making their first forays into an English-speaking baseball world.

Her products include the Ganadores Garantizados (Guaranteed Winners) acculturation program, a series of 10 classes averaging 90 minutes each and given to players during spring training. She also sells the Rookie's English Primer, an instruction book with imitation bank slips for players to practise filling out and sample restaurant menus they can order from.

"It's basically just simple survival skills," said Schnakenberg, whose major-league clients include the Angels, Brewers, White Sox and Cubs.

Another nearby display booth,

for Olympus Flag and Banner, has mascot costumes ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000. A stocky, green turtle stood next to a yellow, giddy-looking creature that was supposed to be a dinosaur.

Dozens of products at the show were touted as potential team giveaways, including various forms of bobblehead dolls.

One table offered Cheer Stix, the noise-making plastic bats used by Angels fans during the World Series, at a cost of 20 cents apiece for an order of 50,000, or 30 cents each for 10,000 sets.

Phoenix resident Holly Davies, a probate lawyer and baseball fan who started a noisemaker company called Stadium Toys five years ago, had sets of colourful cowbells displayed on her table selling at \$3.10 for an order of 5,000. "I thought it was an easy way to make money, but it's not," she said with a smile. "I have fun doing it, though."