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Braves make pitch for knitting fans

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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At Turner Field during a Braves game, Sonya Graves boasts some of the best yarn not wrapped in cowhide and stamped "Rawlings." While some fans needle the slumping home team, Graves simply needles. She can spend nine innings in the stands knitting a multicolored scarf.

"People think it's a lost art. But it's not," said Graves, owner of All That Yarn in Snellville. "It's great because you feel productive, and it keeps your hands busy."



JOEY IVANSCO/Staff
(ENLARGE)

"People think it's a lost art. But it's not," says knitter Sonya Graves, owner of All That Yarn in Snellville.

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What: Braves Stitch N' Pitch

When: Sunday, 1:05 p.m., at Turner Field

Cost: \$12 tickets for knitters and their accompanying spouses and friends as space allows. The knitters also will receive Stitch N' Pitch goody bags as supplies last.

On Sunday, when the Braves host the Florida Marlins, Graves and several hundred women (and a few men) will sit on the third-base side of the field weaving together their two favorite pastimes, baseball and knitting. It's part of Stitch N' Pitch, an event created by the National NeedleArts Association.

"It's not something you see out in public often," Graves said.

Braves hitting coach Terry Pendleton endorses knitting in the stands as a stress-busting technique. His mother knitted while watching his youth league baseball games, said the former wearer of mom-made beanie hats. Women, he said, get the multi-

tasking thread, even if many men don't.

"Men, you see, we can only focus on one thing at a time, but women can do a number of things at once, so they can knit and enjoy a game at the same time," Pendleton said. "Some guys might find that hard to understand."

Braves first baseman Adam LaRoche, who can see why women would knit at home during a game — when they would use commercial breaks to do their craft, doesn't see it working at live games.

"There's just so much activity going on, and you can get smoked by a foul ball," he said.

But the game can be slow at times — especially with the Braves failing to repeat as NL East champs and fading in the wild card standings. A second-string activity numbs the pain.

Laurel Hackinson, who is carpooling to the game with five other knitters, calls knitting and baseball an "awesome combination." She'll be among knitting sympathizers, not her typical dates who forbid her from bringing stitching gear to a sporting event.

"They said it's embarrassing," said Hackinson, who owns the store Magical Threads in Dahlonega.

Hackinson can't wait for the first stitch. Win or lose, she'll make progress on her quilting blocks. And then, there's the protective power of group knitting.

"Being surrounded by knitters," she said, "I won't have to worry about beer being spilled on my stuff."

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