

RFK Stadium at age 50: Redskins, baseball and much more

By Jeremy Borden and Nathaniel Grann

An unidentified man collects turf from RFK Stadium following the Redskins' final game in 1996 before moving to a newer stadium. (Rich Lipski/ The Post) | [VIEW MORE PHOTOS](#) |

In 1961, a chimp was rocketed into space, the 23rd amendment gave District residents the right to vote for president, and Roger Maris belted a home run to overtake Babe Ruth.

It also was the year that [D.C. Stadium](#) — renamed eight years later for Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, who had been assassinated — was born. It was a modern marvel; a place, people were told, that could be transformed from a baseball diamond to a football rectangle and back again. Built on railroad tracks so sections could be moved, those bouncing sections of the stadium have delighted fans.

[Phil Hochberg](#) remembers the excitement.

“Hell, it was a terrible baseball team” when the stadium opened, said Hochberg, a longtime announcer at [RFK](#). “People came out to see the stadium.”

In August 1962, more than 48,000 showed up to see the Senators play the Yankees, said Hochberg, who has kept old media guides and statistics. It remains the biggest D.C. crowd ever to view a baseball game.

Longtime D.C. sports fan and publicist [Charlie Brotman](#), who has represented former players and coaches, said the stadium's highs and lows can be seen in a fickle fan base.

“Washington is an average sports town,” Brotman said. “It is a fantastic *winning* sports town. Winning isn't the most important thing. It's everything.”

On its 50th birthday, we can't offer the aging, groaning stadium behemoth a sip from the fountain of youth or pretend that a once-fresh face hasn't weathered and celebrated decades worth of storms, losses and cathartic triumph. What we can offer is a whiff of nostalgia, a look back at a stadium that has seen its fair share of highs (think Jurgensen, Mitchell, Huff) and bottom-of-the-ninth, soul crushing walk-off home run lows (think the Washington Senators).

RFK lives on through soccer's D.C. United. [Oscar Zambrana](#), who leads La Barra Brava, a fan group that has around 1,300 members, said the stadium is still in pretty good shape — though fans hope D.C. United will one day have a stadium of its own. “The best memory that I have is getting to the stadium and seeing all the great people we have,” Zambrana said.

Here's a look back at a few more RFK memories.