**Theme nights and fireworks for the Bowling Green Hot Rods attract more fans to the ballpark**

The [Bowling Green Hot Rods](https://www.milb.com/bowling-green), a Minor League Baseball team, “injects an extra dose of excitement” for fans as management hosts theme nights and shoots fireworks, Hot Rods fan Brad Schargorodski said.

According to Minor League Baseball’s website, the Hot Rods are an affiliate of the Tampa Bay Rays and were established in 2009. Since then, their fan base has only grown.

Mikayla Algeo, the Manager of Fun for the Hot Rods, said that part of her job is to come up with theme nights along with running the team's social media, organizing community relation efforts and planning all marketing and promotions for the team.

Before the Hot Rods season starts, Algeo works with her team to create what they call a “Promo Bible,” Algeo said. In this book, she has every single theme night laid out consisting of decorations, costumes, music and between-inning games.

“This book helps me with executing theme nights because I am not having to rush at the last minute to figure something out,” Algeo said. “Once the date for a theme night is near, I go back to the book and begin bringing to life everything I had planned out.”

Algeo said the strongest theme nights are usually saved for Fridays and Saturdays because those are their most popular nights. Hot Rods let off fireworks after the game every Friday which already brings a lot of attention. Algeo said that pairing a theme night with fireworks on Fridays makes their attendance “spike.”

Stadium Operations Manager Nick Mariani said post-game shows bring more attention to the fans, such as “Firework Fridays.” He said people seem more excited to come when there is a show held after.

Firework Friday’s and theme nights seem to excite more than just the fans, but also the staff, Schargorodski said. On Friday, April 5, Assistant General Manager Ashlee Wilson got engaged just as the fireworks were going off.

“Her now fiance managed to get her on top of a dugout before the fireworks started and ended up proposing to her,” Schargorodski said. “When she said she would marry him, the fireworks started going off and it was truly one of the most magical things I have ever witnessed.”

Schargorodski said he has been a fan of the Hot Rods for 14 years and doesn’t remember a time where he didn’t have fun at a game. After he had kids, he said the enjoyment only got better as his kids love watching the fireworks every friday.

“My kids always beg to come on Friday nights, specifically for the fireworks they let off,” Schargorodski said. “Fridays seem to be the most crowded day at the stadium, but also the most entertaining.”

On Friday, July 28, 2023, Minor League Baseball records show that 2,823 people attended the Hot Rods home game against Greenville Drive. The Hot Rods won the game with a score of 20-8.

At this game, the theme night celebrated the heritage of Latino and Hispanic players. According to a [post](https://twitter.com/BGHotRods/status/1684973297912397824) on the Hot Rods X account, instead of being referred to as the Hot Rods, the players were referred to as the “Bolidos de Bowling Green.” Along with the celebration of this culture, because it was Friday, fireworks were let off at the end of the game.

The Hot Rods lost against Greenville Drive with a score of 2-8 on Sunday, July 30, 2023. Minor League Baseball records show that 1,214 people attended this home game.

At this game, the theme was “PBS Kids Day.” According to a [post](https://twitter.com/BGHotRods/status/1685024898593210369) on the Hot Rods X account, members of the staff dressed up as Molly of Denali and Alma, characters from the television show “Alma’s Way.”

According to Minor League Baseball records, 1,609 more people attended the first game on Friday, July 28, 2023 where a theme night was paired with fireworks, rather than the game on Sunday, July 30, 2023 where it was a regular theme night without fireworks.

Last Independence Day, the Hot Rods won against the Asheville Tourists at home with a score of 13-0. Minor League Baseball records show that 6,528 people attended the game.

According to Minor League Baseball records, the game played last year on Indepence Day was the most attended home game of the season.

Mariani said that the Hot Rods has the largest firework show in the Bowling Green area and at the last Independence Day game, they were sold out.

“I don’t know how they do it, but they always put on a great firework show, especially on Independence Day,” Schargorodski said.

Mariani said that sometimes the theme nights contain concerts. Last season, he said that Christian Family Radio and IT Support and Managed IT Services paired with the Hot Rods to conduct a “Faith and Family Night” on Friday, July 7.

At the game, the Hot Rods beat the Asheville Tourists with a score of 12-0. After the game, Mariani said that Cade Thomas, a Christian music artist, put on a small concert which was paired with fireworks for the Hot Rods usual “Firework Friday” tradition.

Mariani said that this was their second sold out game of the season and Minor League Baseball records show that 5,434 people attended the game.

Schargorodski said doing a theme night on a Friday when fireworks are let off makes his family want to come even more because of the extra fun. He said he is always impressed with the theme nights because they either always match up with current trends or are old theme nights that have been enjoyed in the past.

“When planning new theme nights I try to think about things that are currently popular and which parts of our fan base we want to target for each theme night,” Algeo said.

Algeo said she is currently in the process of getting all decorations ready for a Taylor Swift inspired night which she says will look very different from other theme nights because Taylor Swift’s fan base mostly consists of young adults.

“The Taylor Swift night will likely not reach the audience that we target for different themes such as one of our opening theme nights of this season called ‘Princess and Pirate,’ which was designed to target children,” Algeo said.

Hot Rods fan Kevin Jones said that he has been attending Hot Rods games for three years now and prefers to go on days where the themes are more “kid-based,” such as the “Princess and Pirate” night. On this particular night, Hot Rods staff handed out princess tiaras or pirate swords to the first 500 children who arrived.

“My kids begged me to come to ‘Princess and Pirate’ night and they always have a blast at theme nights,” Jones said. “We were lucky enough to be there early so my kids could get a pirate sword.”

Jones said his kids tend to get more excited for the games when they know they will also be receiving a free gift if they arrive early. He thinks the giveaways paired with theme nights help in increasing attendance, especially in children.

“My family and I have a good time at the games no matter what, but seeing everyone have a good time participating in theme nights really adds to our experience and makes us feel more welcomed,” Jones said.

Mariani said the purpose of the theme nights is to draw larger crowds and make fans feel more appreciated.

“Our theme nights are huge hits and bring different types of crowds into the ballpark that may not have wanted to come originally if it wasn’t for the theme night,” Mariani said.

Mariani said the Star Wars theme nights seem to be the clear favorite of the fans. He said that this is mainly because on that night they have a realistic R2D2, a popular robot character in Star Wars.

“Fans always love taking pictures with our realistic R2D2,” Mariani said. “Our Star Wars theme night is one of our better, if not our best, theme nights we have.”

Schargorodski said that he is always prepared to have a good time when attending games, especially if there are fireworks or a theme night planned.

“The ballpark has been a great place for my family to come and enjoy a night out,” Schargorodski said. “I never thought I would have fun at a baseball game until I started coming to watch the Hot Rods.”