

Pasadena Star-News

Filmmakers find Dream location Big League Dreams Sports Complex used for 'Benchwarmers'

By Blanca E. Sanchez, Staff Writer

Wednesday, June 22, 2005 - - Steven Kay skipped his sixth-grade graduation ceremony Wednesday morning to play baseball at **Big League Dreams**.

But this was no ordinary game. Steven, 12, of Chino Hills, was one of more than 500 extras used for the film production of "Benchwarmers" at **Big League Dreams** this week.

Fenway Field at Big League Dreams was used for a scene over the past two weeks. During much of Wednesday morning, the production's last day at the sports park, the crew focused on a shot of the audience's reaction to a Little League game.

Scheduled for an April release, "Benchwarmers" stars Rob Schneider, David Spade and Jon Heder. The three men who admit they weren't the best ball players when they were young challenge a group of Little League bullies to a game.

Director Dennis Dugan, whose 14-year-old son, Kelly, plays on a traveling baseball team, said he had visited Big League Dreams and felt it was the right location for the scene.

Big League Dreams, which opened in November 2002, has six baseball fields designed as scaled-down versions of famous Major League baseball stadiums.

"We needed a place that was really nice and already had some structure up," Dugan said. However, a few alterations were made to the field. For one, the production crew chopped off about 110 feet from the outfield to fit Little League standards. "We built this to Little League dimension," Dugan said. "We brought the whole outfield in." The crew also added an ivy-covered brick wall, inspired by Wrigley Field in Chicago, and a wall that resembled the Green Monster at Boston's Fenway Park.

Other baseball scenes were shot at parks in Simi Valley, Culver City and West Los Angeles, among others. Some filming also took place at Prado Regional Park in south Chino, said Tammy Sandler, a publicist for the film. Filming is expected to be completed Saturday, Dugan said.

Darrell Miller, general manager of Big League Dreams, said filming at the park highlights the city and brings in additional revenue. "This puts the entire community on the map," said Miller, who will play an umpire in the film. "It's quite an economic impact for the entire area. We got the local hotels along with food and restaurants."

Although Steven is an extra, he does get to play baseball in the movie as a member of Jerry's Lumber Team, he said. "I'm in game six, which is one of the championship games," said Steven, who hits a home run in the movie. Vahn Bozoian, 11, of Chino Hills, is also on Jerry's Lumber Team. Both boys learned about the filming through Chino Hills Pony Baseball and the All-Star travel team. "I (signed up) for the fun of it," Vahn said. "I might want to be a movie star."

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