



## **Worcester Red Sox: Polar Park's DCU Plaza will have nice rings to it**

Large replicas of Boston's championship mementos will provide photo-ops for visiting fans

By Joe McDonald, Telegram & Gazette  
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WORCESTER — Jason Varitek, Dustin Pedroia, David Ortiz and Alex Cora will all be in attendance the first time the gates open at Polar Park. They also plan on being there every day of the Worcester Red Sox' inaugural season and beyond.

OK, so Tek, Pedey, Papi and AC won't actually be there physically, but a reminder of what they all were able to accomplish with the Red Sox should bring WooSox fans some joy every time they visit Polar Park.

The WooSox have hired Younts Design Inc., of Baltimore, and Fiberglass Farms in Maine to create four giant World Series rings from the 2004, 2007, 2013 and 2018 championships.

The replicas will be housed right outside of the new ballpark in DCU Plaza. DCU Plaza is at the main entrance to the park, on Madison Street.

“As a New Englander, when (Younts Design, Inc.) sent me the list of the rings, I thought, ‘How did this happen? How did we end up with four World Series rings in 15 years?’” said Mike Hurley of Fiberglass Farms. “Personally, it means a lot to be part of a big project like this and we're proud, but I know what this means to Worcester and New England.”

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Both companies have worked previously with architect Janet Marie Smith for the Red Sox, Orioles and Los Angeles Dodgers.

Younts Design Inc., produces the vision, creates the images, and Fiberglass Farms handles the construction of the replica rings.

Many attractions nowadays are created with the idea that people want to take a selfie, or a photo of the kids, pets, or the family enjoying it. Polar Park will be no different, especially with the replica rings.

“It will be a photo-op,” Hurley said. “The rings will stand 42 inches high. You can stand next to it, you can stand in it.”

The process starts with a design, which in this case was using the actual World Series rings of WooSox team president Dr. Charles Steinberg.

The rings are scanned, digitized and then a laser cuts a 4 foot by 4 foot by 4 foot piece of form to the exact detail of the rings. Each ring will weigh 1,000 pounds.

“It’ll look fantastic once it’s done,” Hurley said.

Once completed, the rings will be placed in a tractor-trailer truck and delivered to Polar Park. Once unwrapped and placed in DCU Plaza, the replica rings will add a special touch to the ballparks.

The fan experience at ballparks has completely changed for the better in the last 20 years. Hurley remembers going to the old Yankee Stadium as a child and just how mundane the ballpark looked from the outside.

“There was no branding. There was nothing, just nasty old concrete,” he recalls. “Now, everything is a unified approach graphically. The fan experience is everything. (Polar Park) will have more for fans than the nasty old ballparks. The WooSox are thinking of everything. It starts at the top with Janet Marie and I just count my lucky to be involved with Younts Design.”

Cora, who is preparing for the 2021 season at spring training in Fort Myers, Florida, joked that the ’07 replica should be his since he was still playing that season, instead of ’18 when he was managing.

He does believe the new decorations will serve as a reminder for fans the importance of Triple A, along with being a motivational factor for the players who will walk past those giant rings every day.

“It’s very important for everybody to understand what Triple-A baseball means to what happened at the big league level, right?” Cora said. “For people to see (replica rings) is a reminder that when you go into the ballpark there’s somebody there who’s going to contribute, at one point, for us to win a World Series.

“It’s a reminder for the players, too, when you drive in and see it, you’re like, ‘let me keep working hard to accomplish my dream. First, to make it to the big leagues, and then try to win a World Series.’ So, it’s a nice touch. I like it.”

While the atmosphere outside of Polar Park will be phenomenal, Cora understands what happens on the field, in the clubhouse, in the batting cages, in the bullpen and in the weight room is just as important for the future success of the Red Sox. So it helps these Triple-A players will have a state-of-the-art facility to hone their craft.

“It’s always good when, as far as player development, to give them all the tools that can make them better. That’s very important,” Cora said. “Not only at the Triple-A level, but it starts in the Dominican, in the academies and all the way to the big leagues. So, for us to have a good Triple-A stadium with all the stuff that they need is a plus for the organization.”

Once Polar Park is complete and fully operational, there will be many eye-popping features both inside and outside the park, and the replica World Series rings will probably become the most photographed attraction.

“Yes,” Steinberg said, “there’s room for more.”