



For immediate release

Petco Park named Best New Ballpark for 2004

In their attempts to secure a new ballpark, the Padres certainly encountered a rocky path. Along the way was a contentious ballot initiative in 1998 and numerous legal challenges that delayed construction by almost two years. When April 8, 2004 arrived, though, all of the acrimony was forgotten, and Petco Park made its triumphant debut.

The ballpark drew rave reviews, and fans poured through the turnstiles. Yes, Petco Park has been quite a hit, so it is only fitting that the Padres' new home has been named "BASEBALLPARKS.COM's New Park of the Year."

Each year, the award goes to the new baseball stadium with the best combination of attractive design, superior site selection and fan amenities. Therefore, the honor recognizes not only the governmental entities and team responsible for the new park, it also honors the architectural firm. In this case, HOK Sport + Venue + Event gets the credit for bringing to life the concept of famed design architect Antoine Predock. HOK is well known for its prowess in designing sports facilities, as their list of accomplishments includes Baltimore's Camden Yards, Coors Field in Denver, SBC Park in San Francisco and the 2001 winner of BASEBALLPARKS.COM's award, Pittsburgh's PNC Park.

The plaque signifying that Petco Park is the best new baseball stadium for this year will be presented to the Padres on September 4th. Joe Mock, founder and webmaster of BASEBALLPARKS.COM, will give the award to the team in a ceremony prior to the Padres' game with Colorado. Mock, who is also the author of the book *Joe Mock's Ballpark Guide*, has visited over 200 pro baseball stadiums, including all of the current Major League and spring-training parks.

BASEBALLPARKS.COM first presented this annual award in 2000. However, Mock noted that the competition this year was particularly intense. "Between the Majors and the affiliated Minors, 2004 saw five new parks open," said Mock. "The long-anticipated Play Ball Park in Missoula, Montana was a big hit with the fans, and Montgomery, Alabama's Riverwalk Stadium, designed by HOK, did a masterful job of blending older structures with new construction, like in San Diego. The Phillies actually inaugurated *two* parks in 2004, with an impressive spring-training stadium in Clearwater and the phenomenal Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia. So, yes, Petco had some stiff competition.

“When you come right down to it, both Petco and Citizens Bank Park are among the best ballparks to open in recent years,” Mock continued. “If San Diego’s new park hadn’t opened this year, the Phillies’ new facility would’ve won hands down. However, Petco’s great location and its use of an existing, older structure are what led us to give the award to the Padres.”

The Phillies’ new park was constructed within the Philadelphia Sports Complex, next to the site of Veterans Stadium and the Eagles’ new football facility. “I think baseball is a really special sport, and its games should be played in locations that treat it that way,” Mock said. “Building a new ballpark in the middle of a sea of parking lots and other sports facilities, as Philadelphia did, isn’t treating the sport of baseball in the special way that it deserves.”

Petco Park, conversely, was constructed in downtown San Diego, adjacent to the Gaslamp Quarter. Many of the buildings in this entertainment district are on the National Register of Historic Places. Here fans heading to or from Padres games will find numerous pubs, restaurants and nightlife.

The Western Metal Supply Company building, constructed in 1909, also played a key role in helping Petco Park win the award. Instead of being demolished to make way for construction of the Padres’ new park, the brick edifice was left in place. Today, one corner of its exterior acts as the left-field foul “pole,” and its interior houses the main souvenir shop, two levels of luxury suites and the Hall of Fame Bar and Grill. Even its roof is utilized in much the same way as the rooftop seating areas beyond the outfield at Chicago’s Wrigley Field.

In Mock’s review of Petco Park on the BASEBALLPARKS.COM website, he also praised the two “towers” that rise through the main seating bowl and Petco’s “Park at the Park” beyond the outfield fences.

“It all works together beautifully at Petco,” Mock noted in making the announcement of the award. “Its surroundings, its exterior, its novel design and its amenities for the fans make it the best park I’ve visited in several years.”

Last year, the Best New Ballpark Award went to the Dr Pepper/Seven Up Ballpark in Frisco, Texas. The Frisco RoughRiders are the Texas League affiliate of the Texas Rangers.

Joe Mock’s photography of San Diego’s new stadium, as well as further commentary on Petco Park, can be found at the BASEBALLPARKS.COM website at www.baseballparks.com.

BASEBALLPARKS.COM is devoted to coverage of the parks of the Majors and affiliated Minors. Visitors can find stadium rankings, photos, contests and interactive features about ballparks on this website. It is the most-visited site on the Internet that is devoted solely to baseball parks.

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