

Frazier comes through for disabled batboy, making him my favorite

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Teddy Kremer (left) celebrates after Todd Frazier hits his promised home run. (Jeff Swinger/Cincinnati Enquirer)

Reds third baseman is my favorite baseball player. A few years ago -- even a few days ago -- I would have felt silly saying such a thing about Frazier, or about anyone else. My favorite baseball player? Me? I don't feel old, but I feel too old for that. Plus, sportswriters aren't supposed to have favorite baseball players.

But baseball players aren't supposed to look like this.

Look at that photo at the top of this story. Look at Todd Frazier, and look at the batboy celebrating next to him. His name is Teddy Kremer, and he's not a boy anymore. He's an adult. He's an adult with Down syndrome, which makes me unsure how to refer to him. Do I call him Teddy, which is what I want to do? Or do I call him by his last name, which is how I'd refer to an adult of 30 in most circumstances?

This isn't most circumstances, of course. It's unique and wonderful, and Teddy Kremer doesn't look or act like a "Kremer." He looks and acts like a Teddy, so I'm going to call him Teddy in an effort to capture his zeal and innocence. We need as much of those qualities as we can get in this world, sports and otherwise. So I'm going to call him Teddy.

But Todd Frazier? I'm calling him my favorite ballplayer. I'll tell him that to his face someday, next time I'm at Great American Ballpark. I suspect he won't be weirded out when I walk up to him, introduce myself and tell him he's my favorite. Frazier isn't the awkward-with-affection type. More on that in a minute.

He's a fine player, by the way. Three weeks into the season, Todd Frazier is among National League leaders in home runs, RBI and WAR -- offense and defense -- and has an OPS of .941. Last season he finished third in Rookie of the Year voting with a slash line of .273/.331/.498. He's a former first-round pick out of Rutgers, just turned 27, can play all four corner infield or outfield positions, and has that look of a longtime starter on a longtime pennant contender. On the field, Frazier is worthy of being anyone's favorite player.

But it's off the field where he became mine. It's Teddy.

Maybe you know the story by now, and if you do, you know it for the home run, the called shot, the touching connection between Teddy Kremer and Todd Frazier. I know it for those things, but I know it for two other reasons as well. Those reasons are coming, but for those who don't know the story -- or for those who'd like to relive it -- here it is:

Teddy Kremer handles batboy duties for the Reds from time to time. It started last season when his parents won a silent auction at a local school, minimum bid \$300, for one game as a batboy. The Kremers bid the minimum and won, because nobody else bid. Why? Probably, as the Cincinnati Enquirer's [Paul Daugherty surmised in this beautiful story](#), because people at the school knew how much the Reds meant to Teddy and didn't want to bid against him.

Anyway, Kremer handled those duties with such charm that he became a local sensation and then went national, attending President Obama's State of the Union address in February as a guest of Speaker of the House John Boehner, an Ohio native from nearby West Chester. At one point in the program, Obama picked Teddy out of the crowd and waved.

Teddy has that effect on people. He has it on me, and I've not met him. Not yet, anyway. That's on my bucket list.

Back to Frazier, and the home run. Teddy was a batboy for the Reds game Thursday when he announced in bits and pieces that he wanted three things: 11 runs for the Reds, 11 strikeouts for the pitching staff -- a local pizza company, LaRosa's, gives fans a free pizza when the Reds whiff 11 batters, and Teddy loves that pizza -- and a home run for Todd Frazier.

The Reds scored those 11 runs and recorded those 11 strikeouts. As for Frazier, this is what Teddy told him before his at-bat in the sixth inning: "Come on, hit me a home run, I love you."

And this is what Frazier told Teddy: "I love you too. I'll hit you one."

I love you too.

That's reason No. 1 why Todd Frazier is my favorite player. Not that he promised Teddy a home run, but because he told Teddy, "I love you too." Ballplayer or not, who does that? What grown man tells another grown man that? My favorite player does.

Frazier then hit a 420-foot laser to center -- not a long fly ball that carried, but a line drive that just kept rising. The video of the home run [is midway down this page](#). The home run was unbelievable, the timing and even the scorching majesty of it, but that's not Reason No. 2 why Frazier is my favorite player. The photo is.

That one. The one at the top of this page.

Look at that thing. Look at Teddy's glee, but also look at Frazier. He's giddy, and not because he hit a home run -- but because the home run made Teddy so happy.

Look at that smile on Frazier's face, understand why he's smiling and then tell me he didn't just become one of your favorite players. There's plenty of room on the Todd Frazier bandwagon, so I'll allow it.

But I saw him first.