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## Perspectives: Bubba's owner to throw out first pitch

Restaurateur nervous as Red Sox game nears

*Tom Hayden*

He's a "born and bred" Cleveland Indians fan, but Jay Johnson will be on the pitcher's mound Wednesday to throw out the first pitch at the Boston Red Sox baseball game.

As part of a promotion through his restaurant, Bubba's Roadhouse in Cape Coral, Johnson, 39, will walk nervously to the mound and pray he gets the ball over home plate. Some of baseball's top names will be watching: Boston's Manny Ramirez, Mike Lowell and Josh Beckett as well as Cincinnati's Ken Griffey Jr.

"I just don't want to make a fool of myself," said Johnson, who has been practicing his "heater" from the pitching mound to home plate distance of 60 feet, 6 inches.

He knows boos will echo through City of Palms Park if he bounces it to the yet-to-be-named Red Sox catcher.

"I just want to make sure I don't miss," he said. "I am looking to hear the ball hit the mitt. I want the pop."

Johnson has bat and ball experience. He grew up in Little League and moved into the ageless game of slow-pitch softball. A hand injury ended his career.

Approximately 8,000 people or 16,000 eyes will see his once-in-a-lifetime attempt. A strike doesn't matter. He's just shooting for the mitt. He knows he'll be nervous, but it's not like he's never before been in front of people.

"I cook in front of groups every night," Johnson said.

He'll wear a chef's jacket to the mound at around 1 p.m. Wednesday, with "Bubba 1" on the back and Bubba's Roadhouse on the front.

Johnson opened the Bubba's location on Pine Island Road in 1998, and it has been serving steaks and wings ever since. He had another Bubba's location on Cape Coral Parkway from 1993 to 2001.

If you hear boos about 1 p.m. Wednesday, you'll know he bounced it in.

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