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By Kyle Stack, Special to SI.com

Players take notice of the camera during the game, too. Philadelphia Phillies relief pitcher Ryan Madson said in a 2009 post-game interview that he was "excited to use this camera, finally." Caiafa said that players can't help but notice it when the camera is focused on their dugout. "At first glance, they see it and they think "Is this thing on?"

John Entz, who as senior vice president of Production oversees all original programming at MLB Network, said that players watched *Batting Practice Live* last season from their clubhouse, realized Ballpark Cam was showing a live feed of their dugout and then set a plan to show off their customized handshakes with teammates in front of the camera during the game.

Caiafa remembered a time last June when a heavy rainstorm hit Philadelphia and drenched Citizens Bank Park in the afternoon before that night's game. Even though the field displayed no evidence of a recent downpour on *Batting Practice Live*, Ballpark Cam showed the strength of the rainstorm from earlier in the day.

The cameras are usually running by early afternoon in each ballpark. Local technicians employed by MLB stay at their respective ballparks all season (There are usually two or three technicians for each park). Their responsibilities include performing camera maintenance, although they don't operate them. That's controlled by a small staff at MLB Network's studios in Secaucus, N.J.

Operators there pan and zoom the cameras and switch from ballpark to ballpark with the click of a mouse. Every day, several hours before games begin, operators will use the cameras to scout potential storylines. Whether it's a hitter who's working out the kinks in his swing or a star returning from injury, it's one operator's job to seek out who's practicing and what shots need to be "banked" for use later on *MLB Tonight* and other shows. It's another operator's job to ensure those sessions are recorded.

As this information is being logged, the operators keep their eyes open for other shots they feel could be used. It can be as simple as video of St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Albert Pujols working with catcher Yadier Molina on his swing, a random occurrence camera operator Amelia Schimmel noticed and logged one day last season. Another time, Schimmel captured Detroit Tigers catcher Victor Martinez, then on the Boston Red Sox, throwing batting practice to his son.

It's those kinds of shots that weren't seen before Ballpark Cam. "The ancillary benefits have been much more than I think anybody anticipated," Entz said.

Each high-resolution, high-definition camera is protected from the elements with its own weather shell. Of course, it's not the protection from rain and snow that makes them unique. It's their technology.

Panasonic AK-HC1500C box cameras, which can pan 320 degrees with zoom capability, are used in centerfield. A common complaint from baseball fans is that game cameras aren't lined up with home plate. The centerfield camera in this case doesn't need to be streamlined with the plate; there's no strike zone coverage associated with the camera. What's prioritized is that the Panasonic cameras have a clear shot to pan across the field and zoom into home plate.

"They give us a nice, cleaner picture for as long a lens as we have to put on there to be able to go from centerfield to home plate," said Mark Henry, MLB Network's Director of IT.

A Canon BU-45H camera system is implemented behind home plate or in the home team dugout, depending on each park's logistics. Henry said MLB Network will define where the camera should go, but they work with teams if home plate or dugout space is taken up by other equipment.

The Canon's features include 20x zoom capability, 340-degree panning and a Telemetrics Televator robotic system that can adjust the camera's height from 4 to 12 feet. "It gives us the price/performance combination that we needed," Henry said.

The technology used to make the Ballpark Cam system a possibility was already in existence before the MLB Network introduced the cameras. Yet Henry said that he and the rest of the MLB Network IT crew had to adapt it to ensure the network could operate from all MLB ballparks.

The first cameras were at the Padres' PETCO Park. MLB Network installed Ballpark Cam in five additional parks before the 2009 season, six more during that season and another ten in 2010, including at Yankee Stadium, Dodger Stadium and AT&T Park in San Francisco. They continued running installations through nearly every remaining ballpark, with Baltimore's Oriole Park at Camden Yards serving as the 29th ballpark to receive the camera system. Sun Life Stadium in Miami is the lone ballpark without the cameras; MLB Network will wait until the Marlins move into their new ballpark in 2012 before installing the system.

The Rundown and *MLB Tonight*, which begins at 6 p.m. EST, an hour before the first night's games commence, will serve as the primary venues on which to use Ballpark Cam as a game preview tool. (The 5-6 p.m. EST slot between *Rundown* and *Tonight* is filled by *Intentional Talk*, a live talk show that's hosted by Chris Rose and Kevin Millar.)

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