Project Highlight: MLB Home Run Derby VR (All-Star Game Activation + Retail Release)

Situation

MLB wanted a new way to engage fans, especially younger and tech-savvy audiences, at live events. We saw an opportunity to create a VR experience that merged the excitement of the Home Run Derby with cutting-edge gameplay and real-time fan interaction.

Task

I was tasked with leading the end-to-end development of the project—product vision, external dev management, event rollout, and post-launch LiveOps—for both retail and live-activation builds. The goal was to launch by the 2018 All-Star Game and eventually scale to stadiums, VR platforms, and international activations.

Action

* Improved the arcade-style VR batting experience allowing control based on bat angle and timing, ensuring gameplay was accessible to all ages (from kids to grandparents).
* Sourced and managed a Canadian development partner and art vendors in India and China, keeping production under a tight $1M budget.
* Designed the game’s content calendar using a seasonal structure tied to MLB events and holidays.
* Oversaw localization for Spanish, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese markets for global expansion.
* Produced live events, including the 2018 All-Star Game Finals and Little League World Series Tournament, and helped integrate sponsors like T-Mobile and Louisville Slugger.
* Directed LiveOps, adding progression systems and meta-features that boosted engagement and retention.
* Handled all submissions across Meta Quest, PSVR, Steam, and Viveport.

Result

* #1 stream on Twitch during 2018 All-Star Game tournament (2.68M live views, 125K peak CCU)
* #2 most-watched esports event on ESPN in 2018
* Installed in 20 MLB ballparks and featured at over 50 international events
* 2022 update increased Time Spent in App by 50% and fan throughput by 56% at activations
* Clio Award shortlist (2019), multiple Webby nominations

Personally authored the game’s live roadmap, oversaw art/brand approvals, led dev standups, and served as QA lead and platform liaison.

Why It Matters

This project blended my skills in game design, production, external dev management, and brand/IP stewardship. But most importantly, it was the most rewarding experience of my career—z

Sometimes a project comes along that lets you use every skill you’ve picked up over 20+ years in games—creative, strategic, logistical—and still teaches you something new. That’s what Home Run Derby VR was for me. What started as a pitch for a simple batting simulator became a multi-platform product line, a live-event crowd-pleaser, and one of the most rewarding experiences of my career.

It kicked off with a challenge from MLB: how do we make VR meaningful for fans—not just cool tech, but something truly *fun* and *inclusive*? My answer was an arcade-style baseball experience built around the Home Run Derby, with gameplay easy enough for a five-year-old to enjoy but satisfying enough for a seasoned gamer. And yes—we had players as young as 4 and as old as 95.

I led the entire production effort: scoped the vision, wrote the specs, sourced the Canadian dev team, and managed a global art pipeline with vendors in India and China. All of it had to be done on a sub-$1M budget and live in time for the All-Star Game. No pressure.

We launched our first tournament build live in Washington, DC, at the 2018 All-Star Game. It was a hit—literally and figuratively. The Twitch stream peaked at 125,000 concurrent viewers and hit #1 in the Gaming category with over 2.6 million live views. That same year, we took it to the Little League World Series, and the ESPN broadcast became the #2 most-watched esports event on cable TV.

Following that success, we scaled the game to retail platforms (Meta Quest, PSVR, Steam), activated in 20 MLB ballparks, and rolled out global tournaments in Japan, Korea, Latin America, and London. I ran LiveOps across all SKUs, adding content and meta-game systems that boosted session time by 50%. I even led the UX tweaks that increased fan throughput at live events by 56%.

I wore a lot of hats—game designer, product manager, event producer, QA lead, even brand liaison for integrations with T-Mobile and Louisville Slugger. But the best part? Watching thousands of fans swing for the fences in VR, often for the first time, and seeing them light up. That’s why we do this.