

Twins hire not one but two people to be mascot T.C. Bear

The new T.C. Bear — actually, both of them — have "collegiate and professional mascotting experience."

By Paul Walsh (<http://www.startribune.com/paul-walsh/10646171/>) Star Tribune |

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The Twins have hired not one but two people to take over portraying T.C. Bear, the longtime mascot whose previous alter ego donned the furry get-up for the last time several months ago, a team executive said Tuesday.

The job-sharing duo took over in time for the recent offseason Twins Winter Caravan and TwinsFest promotional events, said Nancy O'Brien, the team's vice president for community engagement.

In October, Greg Wilfahrt was told he would no longer fulfill the role (<http://www.startribune.com/twins-part-ways-with-the-human-who-portrays-mascot-t-c-bear/563209062/?refresh=true>) he had played without missing a game since the character's creation in 2000.

The team has declined to elaborate on Wilfahrt's departure, and O'Brien kept to that position Tuesday, saying, "We are grateful for all Greg did to help introduce and build T.C. as a character and an important part of the Twins brand."

Wilfahrt told the Star Tribune a few weeks after losing the duties that "I had a different idea of how the mascot program should be run than upper management had, and it didn't work in my favor."

"A pretty thorough" audition process to fill full- and part-time T.C. Bear openings identified eight finalists, said O'Brien, who said that adding a part-timer is for insurance should the main portrayer fall ill or if the team needs to have T.C. Bear be in two places at the same time.

The applicants were given in-costume performances to execute along with "their own personal skit that they directed," she said.

O'Brien said baseball skills were also required of the wannabes: "Can they catch a first pitch? Can they hit a ball?" T.C. Bear's on-field duties at times include receiving a pregame pitch and staging a home-run hitting contest with fans.

O'Brien declined to identify the two new hires, not even to her own teenage children, other than to say they are young men who played organized baseball at some time in their lives and have "collegiate and professional mascotting experience."

"The person who steps into the suit brings the wonderful character of T.C. to life," she said, "but T.C., not the person portraying him, is the hero and our focus as an organization."

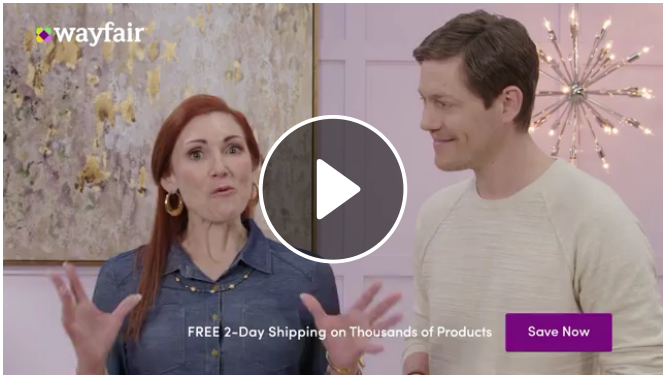
Along with revving up fans of all ages at Twins home games and at spring training in Fort Myers, Fla., since 2000, T.C. Bear has been making appearances year-round at Twins youth clinics, schools, hospitals and parades. He's also available for hire for private parties or corporate events.

The public's next chance to see T.C. Bear live is 9 a.m. Saturday, when he'll attend the American Lung Association's 31-floor "Fight for Air Climb" inside U.S. Bank Plaza in downtown Minneapolis.



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Twins' mascot T.C. Bear poses for a photo with young fans, from left to right, Oliver Burkland, Winston Mielke, Wyatt Mielke and Charlie



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