

My friend was one of the winners of the lottery to purchase tickets, but his wife had to cancel due to their daughter being ill. This gave me the opportunity to go to opening night in Carmax Park. If you don't want to read the whole thing, here is the nutshell version. This is a miniature version of Nationals Park.

You park in the same old parking lot behind the Diamond, and you walk to a large entrance in left field of the new one, walking up a whopping eight stair steps. We opted to take a tour walking around the entire park, which is easy to do. For somebody going alone, I would suggest the rails. There are numbered fixed high seats at tables surrounding much of the park, with a concentration of several layers of them in left field. There was a jazz band that played some Dixieland as we walked in, and accompanied the singing of *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*, as well as playing music after the game for entertainment before fireworks.

There are also a bunch of areas you don't have access to, as they have many corporate areas to rent out and the second level is for skyboxes and the press box only. Food isn't exotic or weird, there are bars and only a few stands, many of which sell similar things, but convenience is big. It's roomy, and the most unique areas are the RVA markets, with convenience store sandwiches and wraps, a hot bar with nachos in a helmet, hot dogs and hamburgers, as well as chips, bottled drinks and candy next to self-checkout kiosks. It was surprisingly fast before game time.

Like Nationals Park, again, the seats are not angled as high as they were at the Diamond. If you are sitting behind someone tall, you can be blocked from seeing critical parts of the field. I was in row L behind the first base dugout. And with a very impressive and large videoboard (which was clearly visible in direct sunlight) in right field, we had to look completely away from the field to read the board. I would recommend that anyone sit on the third base side.

The sound system is excellent, and the National Anthem was played by a jazz trumpeter, which was brilliant because on opening night, no crazed Orioles fans shouted O's in the middle of the song. Having said this, there were some opening night hiccups. There is a tower in left field that gives statistics for players and includes when they were drafted and in what round. Only so many on either team could possibly have been picked in the ninth round of the 2024 draft, but it was stuck on that for a very long time. There is also an indication of a radar gun for pitch speeds, but it gave only an advertisement for Estes until about six innings in.

I remember seeing an ad for someone that wanted to wear the flamingo suit and throw hot dogs into the crowd. If the position isn't still open, it should be. The guy tonight, after two hot dogs, wasn't able to get three out of the next four above the screen. The place to sit is around section 106 above the third base dugout porch, since his assistant picked up the ones that fell short and a couple others into that section as they left the field.

There was very little power hitting, as a stern wind from the north blew back some really well hit balls. The only homer of the game was to left field, straight into the wind... or actually the general direction the wind was coming from, as it didn't get high enough to get trapped by the wind.

We also had an inning with consecutive plays that ended with outfielders throwing out runners trying to score. A questionable call that kept a second run from scoring on a hit, followed by a would-be sacrifice fly and amazing throw from left field so that the third out at the plate wasn't even remotely close.

The bottom line is that all the messed up City of Richmond entities that kept on throwing roadblocks to a new ballpark finally got something right. This is a really great place to watch a minor league game.