

You know things aren't all that hot in the Commissioner's kingdom when you log onto the internet at midnight the night before the game and get tickets in the fourth row behind third base.

DISCLAIMER – I started this venture in a foul enough mood. One thing I expected to be able to do on an 18 day trip to northern Indiana was see Wrigley Field. While the Cubs were in town this weekend, they had a Saturday day game (I worked that morning) and a Sunday night game (too late to drive two hours to get back and then teach classes the next morning). The White Sox being out of town, I took the three hour jaunt to Milwaukee.

My mood certainly had not improved after paying \$5.95 in tolls to drive 3 ½ hours from Elkhart to Milwaukee, but the sight of the stadium is pretty breathtaking. It looks like it's on a hill or something, though that's not entirely true. It's high enough ground, but unlike many of the newer stadiums that are built part underground, the field itself is only about ten or twenty feet below ground level. There are four levels of seats and the roof is massive, so we're talking about a lot of straight up airspace here. It's an unusual retractable roof, and it looks like King Kong's walking bridge over left field, with the bridge over right field lacking the hand rails.

Speaking of breathtaking, I about choked just walking through the parking lot, because it looks like a bomb went off with all the smoke from so many people cooking in the parking lot. Seriously – there were no fewer than 150 grills going JUST IN THE PARKING LOT I WAS IN – there are several lots, and these folks had been cooking all morning. Actually that was good, because there were no lines at the concession stands inside. Not that there should have been, since only 23,000 people came out to this huge park on an 80 degree bobble-head giveaway day with not a cloud in the sky. The bobblehead dolls were only for those 12 and under by the way, but you could buy some in the Brewer's store. I passed, thank you Mr. Commissioner.

Such a waste of an incredible stadium, though, is that you can just tell it was built by a used car salesman. While it was very clean, large, and

comfortable, and you could walk around and still see the field while in line at the concession stands, there was just no baseball feel, and certainly no Brewer pride built in. The guy sitting next to me said that was because they ran out of money working on the roof and couldn't afford amenities. Still figuring that one out. At the souvenir stands, there were the usual assortment of baseballs, bats, and t-shirts. But the only jersey for sale was Ken Griffey Jr.

Like you, I've been hearing for years about the grilled bratwurst that makes Milwaukee so unique, and of course I got one. Frankly, I was about devastated to learn just what a lack of a big deal this was. The brat was only the size of a hot dog wiener (smaller than most at just about any major league ballpark), and had no special unique taste to it. What a disappointment.

I was certainly not disappointed in my seat. I was in row 4, just behind third base, on the same level as the dugout. I feel farther from the action in the third row of the Diamond. It was really unbelievable. I just as well could have sat anywhere though, because there are no ushers. Once I got in the stadium, no one was there to look at my ticket or help if I couldn't find my seat. And being that far down on the field, the park itself seems even more huge. It was a long way up to see Bernie Brewer or whatever his name is with the left field slide – and he used that thing quite a bit, seeing as how Danny Graves was pitching for the Reds.

At the end of the sixth inning, the famous sausage races went by. And yes, there were several fans in the front row that threatened the runners with inflatable baseball bats. They ran two-by-two though instead of four abreast, and stayed far away. What I didn't realize was that in front of the Brewers dugout, they had little kiddie sausages and they did a relay with the kids running the last 30 feet or so. I asked if that was normal, but nobody had ever been to a game before that was sitting around me.

The seventh inning stretch was just that – a stretch. They played the same Kate Smith tape of God Bless America that is played at the Diamond, and then they played Take Me Out to the Ballgame. THEN the

announcer acted real excited about singing Roll Out the Barrel, but no one sang that, either.

When Jenkins fell asleep and watched a lazy fly to left bounce five feet in front of him, Cincy came back from two down to take the lead in the top of the ninth... then they played that same stupid tape of the Hoosiers speech, again just like at the Diamond. Have they ever seen a major league game here?

The Brewers tie in the ninth, and NO WONDER BUD CALLED THE ALL STAR GAME – HALF THE CROWD LEFT AFTER NINE!!! I seriously couldn't believe it! Less than half the crowd stayed for the extra innings, and it hadn't even been a long game. Seriously – I was in total shock!

Worse, in the bottom of the tenth they brought out the Rally Rabbit. This was really disgusting. The poor right handed batter is trying to concentrate, but right in his line of sight some fool mascot is dancing on the dugout throwing gifts into the crowd. After Cincy scored in the 11<sup>th</sup>, no rabbits were in sight and the game ended peacefully.

Honestly guys, it's like they have seen everyone else's tricks and try to bring in pale imitations of them. I'm not at all a proponent of contraction, but if any organization needs to be eliminated, I could support it being this one.