

I took my father to go see the Washington Nationals for his 75th birthday. The “best available” seats were in the lower deck reserved, behind first base.

Driving there was a little weird, since it looked like there was easy access to exit the park, but not a clear way to get there. But it was a Sunday afternoon game, and it wasn’t a bad drive from the national mall area over to RFK. We got there and checked out our seats - we were pretty far in the back, but at least we were covered – there was a good chance of rain. I was very disappointed that we couldn’t see the scoreboard and our view was significantly blocked by the press box jutting down in front of us such that a fly ball to left field was little more than a rumor. Fortunately, the only game Dad’s been to in the last 15 years was at Jacob’s field, and he sat in the outfield about six rows up from Bob Uecker. He was really excited that we were this close, so I kept my mouth shut.

I have heard that they sort of rushed the renovations of this park to accommodate the team, and it showed. There was some kind of flap about how the ring of honor was taken down or something, but was replaced in time for the start of the season. Sure enough it was there, but it was just a tarp in right field with the names and teams. They also made a bunch of announcements and player introductions, but in the entire game I was never able to understand a single word the PA announcer said. The guy next to me was scoring, and I helped him look up the program (a free newspaper thing – if they had a real program for sale, they need to work on their marketing a little) to match numbers when they brought in a new pitcher or something.

The food selection reminded me a lot of Shea Stadium – as in not much of a selection. All my father wanted was a hot dog though, so that worked out well. I paid my \$14 for two hot dogs and two stadium cup cokes, and we sat to watch the tarp being taken off the field. If you can imagine the Keystone Cops rolling up a tarp, you have some idea of our mealtime entertainment.

Sure enough, it rained from the fourth through sixth innings, but never enough for the game to be stopped, although it was coming down pretty good for a while in the bottom of the fifth with the Cubs up 3-2. Now keep in mind that these teams were tired from a 1AM finish the night before, it was getaway day, the Cubs are up in what has just become an official game, and Greg Maddux is a veteran pitcher...who suddenly has major issues with the mound. He would throw a pitch, want the game stopped to look at the mound...after throwing at a pretty rapid pace up until then. The umpires still don’t stop the game, though, and Maddux eventually gives up a three run homer. Suddenly, he’s back pitching at full speed and the Cubs have no more issues with the mound the rest of the game.

Anyway, this can really be taken out of context, but the best thing about this park is leaving it. I noticed in looking at the stadium map that parking lot #8 exits directly onto

IH295, so I was already off the beltway and headed home before the post-game show ended on the radio.

So the Nats won in an exciting game, my father and I had one of those great bonding memories, but now my mother complains that Dad hasn't so much as seen a hotdog since without commenting how many of those he could have had for the \$4.50 (that he didn't have to pay, mind you) spent at the ballpark.