

Fans Returning to Sports- Report #4

Since sending Report #3 from St Louis a week ago, the journey's last week was equally as memorable. The time between locations continued to surprise me the wrong way, I discovered angels in unexpected places and after visiting people I'd only known previously thru Zoom, it was great to reconnect with friends GL, JD, Hop and TP who all went out of their way for me.

Day one of week 4 included stops to see Matt Guay @ Victory Field the home of the AAA Indianapolis Indians, lunch with maybe my smartest Canadian friend (anybody else finish 1st in his/her Commerce class at Queens?) Greg Loewen from Digonex Pricing and I wrapped the day up in Cincinnati to see the Reds. The Indians are all about ticket flexibility and have with a great Club seat area, Digonex survived Sports closing down by diversifying to attractions and The Great American Ballpark (GAB) in Cincinnati is unique. GAB doesn't have a Stadium Sponsor, sells a hard ticket at the box office, has a terrific customer services area(s), you can attach an all-inclusive food package to any ticket, scorecards are free, and it has so many food stations/bars in the stadium that you could easily have thought the away Milwaukee Brewers were the home team.

The next stop was Harrisburg Pennsylvania which due to construction and miscalculation was 3 hours longer than I expected. After travelling through tunnels cut into the mountain, passing trucks parked on the shoulder and being the only Non-Amish @ my highway breakfast spot, I was happy to get to Harrisburg 8 hours of drive time after leaving the Reds game. Meeting the Harrisburg Senators head of business operations Randy Whitaker (might be the most interesting man in the world) made the drive worthwhile. New High-top tables everywhere, kid's zones, and a converted group tent now offering F&B plus a game surprise we're all rammed due to his COVID induced on-the-fly ideas. The fact I met Randy as he departed the field in a disco suit (just finished his third inning on field skit) and said goodbye to him while he was directing stadium post game traffic earned him special status.

My last half week wrapped up visiting the Lehigh Valley Pigs, the Mets and finished up seeing the Yankees who were playing the Blue Jays in the background. In Lehigh Valley I met with Brian DeAngelis who helps run a premier AAA operation in east coast baseball and I learned why. With terrific grounds, sponsorship everywhere (I stayed in one of the hotel rooms) and a robust Season Ticket Holder event calendar that aspires to run all 12 months, the reasons for the success stand out. In addition, Brian sold a 10-year mid seven figure partnership to be the official "Air" sponsor in the AAA stadium.

After taking my COVID test in Allentown, PA I was back to New York where my plan to drop off my stuff in Manhattan, the Jade Air Purifier (which should be in every hotel and sports suite) in Flushing NY and my car back at JFK Airport before visiting the Mets was partially delayed due to a flat tire in the New Jersey turnpike.

Upon arrival to the Mets, I was greeted in his suite by Jeff Deline who recently became the CRO of the New York Mets. Lucky Mets, Jeff is a revenue machine, visionary and from all reports as collaborative a boss you'll ever have. Citi Field was gorgeous and when slightly modernized will be a NY destination.

My last night was Yankee stadium to see the Blue Jays. Special thanks to Cristina Campana from the Yankees for helping organize my visit and Zack Hample (bonus marks if you recognize the name) for making me a hero to my 14 son and posing for a photo. The park has great bones, monument row in the outfield is awesome and tables in row seating was unique. That said, seeing my Jays end a 6-game losing streak was the real highlight.

In Summary, this is the last report and after being greeted by 22 governors (2 in the Airport and 20 on highway signs), visiting 19 teams and seeing 16 events over almost 5000 miles in 22 days, I have plenty of people to thank.

First off, thanks to those who shared their time and insight. Whether they were a Chief, a team executive, an usher, a club seat host, parking lot attendant or the fan beside me, all of your insight was invaluable and most of it I could never have captured over a Zoom. The ticketing landscape has dramatically changed and seeing/hearing first-hand how proactive teams are successfully adjusting was achieved thanks to the time you shared with me onsite.

Special thank list:

My kids and their wonderful Mother. The trip doesn't happen, and the Playbook is never written unless Charis Kelly agrees to care for the kids and cat for 22 straight days. The kids Facetiming every night was awesome.

Kelly: She broke up the trip by coming to Florida during my southern swing, made sure I had my COVID requirements aligned, picked me up in Fort Erie and had my house stuffed with Food in the event my quarantine exemption wasn't accepted.

Tom Pistore, Jeff Deline and Dave Hopkinson- Tom arranged with his doorman to give me in his place in NYC for the three days I was going to be there and went overboard to make sure it was easy for me. Jeff is not only a great supporter but adjusted my bookend Mondays to greet/host me upon arrival on May 3rd and created a suite night for my adjusted May 24th arrival back. Dave Hopkinson for who the Playbook idea originated and who endorsed the project, adjusted his schedule to connect on May 3rd and rerouted his Uber to get me back to Tom's place after the Mets game on May 24th.

Eric Grundfast (Iowa Wild): What could have felt like a lonely weekend turned into a highlight thanks to Eric. Not only did Eric host me @ the Wild's last game and fill the Playbook with terrific ideas but with the next day falling on Sunday he adjusted his golf Sunday foursome into a fivesome to ensure I was included.

Two Angels I met last week:

Trevor New Jersey turnpike cleaning crew: Rescued me and my blown tire from what could have been a 90-minute window waiting for CAA on the shoulder of the Express lane by changing my tire 10 minutes after it blew up and therefore sending me back on my way. Fort

Erie Border Patrol: Without sharing details, after a long trip and hearing stories about the border crossing being tough, I'm just going to say that my guy was understanding and made the crossing very easy which wasn't expected but certainly appreciated.

Cheers,