

THE TATTOO

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On the first baseline at the World Series

By SEAN SOLTYS
The Tattoo

Following the Boston Red Sox closely is always a rollercoaster ride, but this year was the wildest one I've ever had.

Where I live, I can't see most of the games on television, so I listen to every game I can on the radio and surf all the sports Internet sites every day for news and Sox chat.

Frankly, I'm consumed with the Red Sox all year long.

Trips to Fenway Park are the greatest and the day after the Red Sox defeated the New York Yankees in Game 7 of the American League playoffs, I found out something that made all the memorable games I'd ever been to seem like nothing: the Red Sox were playing the St. Louis Cardinals in the 2004 World Series, and I was going to be there.

My dad bought tickets to all of the Series games scheduled at Boston's Fenway Park. When I heard the news, I was ecstatic. The Red Sox had just completed the best comeback in the history of sports and now they were going for their first World Series victory since 1918.

On our drive to Boston, I talked with my father about the past blunders and chokes by the Sox, their current team, and everything that had to do with the World Series. We got to Fenway about 6:15 p.m. for a scheduled 8:10 first pitch.

We headed straight for our usual lot - and were stunned to see that it was full two hours before game time. Luckily, my dad had a few backup plans, but those lots were filled, too.

We started to get frantic. Suddenly, my dad zeroed in on a parking garage still allowing cars to enter. He stepped on the pedal and was the second to last car that was admitted. To our surprise, the last garage open cost only \$30 - a bargain compared to the \$45 charged at the other lots.

We walked into the ballpark about 6:45 and made a beeline to our favorite before-the-game spot at Fenway. I'm not talking about the Green Monster or the Pesky Pole, but the Designated Driver Booth. This booth is a place where people go and pledge not to drink for the whole game. After you make the promise, the woman at the booth gives you a wristband and a coupon for a free Coke for everybody in your party. My dad never drinks at games anyway so this is a great way to save \$7.50 and quench our thirst midway through the game.

Not all the stars were on the field

Plenty of celebrities joined the World Series crowd at Fenway. Ben Affleck was there as always, for the first two games. You can't see Ben Affleck without a girlfriend to accompany him, and this month's girl is fellow Hollywood star Jennifer Garner.

My two sisters joined us for Game 2 and these two stars were my older sister Katie's main focus through the first four innings. She was searching vigorously with binoculars through the box seats all around the Red Sox dugout in her quest for the couple.

She finally spotted them in the third inning and was watching their reactions to the game through the

fourth. Later in the game, she was thrilled to run into Jennifer and Ben on the way to the bathroom and took a picture.

Never mind that baseball history was being made, that the Red Sox were on their way to their first World Series win since 1918. Jennifer and Ben were my sister's highlight of the night.

After Katie told my dad about this, he set off for the bathroom. What do you know, on his way back he saw Donna Summer, who happened to be singing "God Bless America" that night.

"Hey, Donna!" my dad exclaimed. She smiled at him, but the fellow behind my dad said, "Donna who?"

Steven Tyler of Aerosmith sang the national anthem at the first game and American Idol winner Kelly Clarkson sang "God Bless America."

James Taylor, a star in attendance at Game 2, performed the best of any of the singers in the first two games, delivering a great rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Among other luminaries at Game 2, Tom Hanks and Jimmy Fallon were both lucky enough to be sitting in the Green Monster seats.

Two beloved, but lesser-known bands out of Red Sox Nation that performed at the Series were the Dropkick Murphys and The Standells.

The Dropkick Murphys sang their remake of "Tessie," an old Red Sox song from 1903. This song has become a hit in Boston and the person in charge of music at Fenway plays it before every game.

The Standells have been around since the 1960s. The folks at Fenway have been playing their song "Dirty Water" after every win since that time. Fenway Park exploded with applause and everyone sang along when those two bands were announced.

Woody, Papi and Pokey

Our seats were in section 11, which is down the first baseline. They were great seats, but then again, every seat is good at the Fall Classic.

Unfortunately, the only way you could exit our row was the left end, where we happened to be sitting. All of the people who got up to get beer or go to the bathroom (which was about three-quarters of our row) had to pass us, so we were forced to get up every half inning.

When Game 1 started, the fireworks began as soon as the Red Sox got up. With two men on and nobody out in the first inning, David "Papi" Ortiz came up to the plate and hammered a shot just inside the Pesky Pole to make it 3-0.

Nobody could believe that the Red Sox would jump ahead so early in the series. The crowd quickly struck up a chant of "Who's your Papi?!", making a mockery of the "Who's your daddy?" chant that echoed through Yankee Stadium after Red Sox pitcher Pedro Martinez called the Yankees his daddy.

In the bottom of the third, with the score 4-2, the Sox bats came alive again, scoring three more runs. The crowd jumped all over the Cardinal's pitcher, Woody Williams, by chanting "WOODOOYYY" non-stop until he finally got pulled with one out in the third inning and the score 7-2, Red Sox.

I got a chuckle out of seeing an elderly lady a couple seats down across the aisle from me chanting that, and wondered if she even knew what it meant.

As you may know, the Red Sox defense leaves something to be desired.

The Not-So-Slick Sox managed to have four errors in this game but still pull away with the victory. Since the game was so close, every time the Sox made an error, the Beantown crowd lost its life for an inning or so.

When outfielder Manny Ramirez made his seemingly critical error by tripping over nothing and botching a catch, the crowd went silent except for a few angry fans. The Cardinals tied the game on that play, so it was the worst one of the game. But on his way back to the dugout, Manny was all smiles.

I was lucky enough to see the Red Sox play Game 4 of the American League

playoffs against the Yankees, when Sox began the comeback.

Second baseman Mark Bellhorn - who replaced Pokey Reese midway through the season - was terrible in that playoff game, so in the first game of the World Series, Fenway was scattered with "We want Pokey!" chants. (Yes, I did take part in them, I won't deny it.)

But Bellhorn silenced those hecklers when he hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the eighth inning that deflected off the Pesky Pole to make



Photo courtesy Soltys family

Sean, Katie and Christie Soltys at Fenway Park in Boston for Game 2 of the 2004 World Series

it 11-9, Sox.

Bellhorn had hit one to almost the same spot on the previous pitch that hooked barely foul. When he hit it again, everyone stood up and I couldn't see the field, but I just kept my eye on the Pole because it was headed in that direction, and it was the only thing I could see anyway. I saw the ball come down and pound into the pole.

I thought I was going to go deaf because the crowd was so loud. I always had wondered what the crowd sounds like from outside the building when someone hits a home run. If I hear a sound that loud again, I may never know.

The rest of Game 1 was uneventful except for Keith Foulke pitching an outstanding top of the ninth for the save.



Red Sox Nation

After the last out, Fenway remained full.

Everyone stayed in the stadium, singing "Dirty Water" at the top of their lungs.

The World Series crowd sings a lot more than the people at the regular season games. "The National Anthem," "God Bless America," and "Dirty Water," along with other songs played between innings, all had at least half the crowd singing along.

It's become something of a Red Sox tradition to play "Sweet Caroline," an old Neil Diamond tune, in the middle of the eighth inning as a crowd sing-along. After Diamond's line, "Oh, oh, oh, Sweet Caroline," the music guy shuts off the sound and everyone sings, "OH, OH, OH" together. It's always fun to sing a great song with 35,000 other people you don't know.

Outside Fenway, huge crowds of people packed the streets.

After the tragic death of Emerson student Victoria Snelgrove following the Game 7 win over the Yankees in the playoffs, the Boston police weren't taking any chances.

Cops dressed in riot gear - wearing flip-down shield masks and carrying night sticks - lined Kenmore Square shoulder to shoulder. But they were nice enough to pose for a picture with me

before we headed off to the hotel to get some shut-eye before Game 2.

The next day dawned cold and damp. We hoped the weather would get better by game time but we knew the chances of that were about the same as the chances of Babe Ruth coming back to life and saying sorry to Red Sox Nation.

My two sisters, Katie and Christie, were coming to Game 2 with us, so we got them in the afternoon and made it back to Fenway 20 minutes earlier than the day before to ensure a parking spot. This time, we went straight to our new garage, and we still snagged the second-to-last available parking spot. We thought it was a little bit strange to be in the exact same parking spot even though we arrived at a completely different time than the day before. But maybe it was a good luck omen...

It was the first time in four years that my sisters had been at Fenway Park, so we went around the ballpark, taking pictures from every angle.

The weather got worse as the day wore on. A cold mist was coming from beyond center field and blowing towards home plate. It stayed cold and damp throughout the game, but the Fenway fans still had fun, and we lucked out with dry, covered seats.

Curt Schilling was pitching Game 2 for the Red Sox with stitches connecting his tendon to his ankle so it wouldn't move. We learned before the game that the only other time this surgery had ever been done - except twice on Schilling - was when the Sox doctor practiced it on a corpse. We found that a little disturbing.

We expected a decent performance from Schilling, but not greatness. He ended up pitching six innings, letting up only five hits and one run. My dad pointed out that he really pitched seven and a third innings because of the four errors the Red Sox made.

The Sox jumped right out of the gate in the first inning with two runs when Cardinals pitcher Matt Morris walked Manny and Papi. Next, Sox Catcher Jason Varitek tripled 410 feet to center field, setting the tone for the rest of the night. Bellhorn was a star again, with a two-run double in the fourth inning.

Foulke was brought in with four outs to go and he was great again, even with no rest.

With a 2-0 lead in the World Series, I felt fairly hopeful, but was afraid about the Sox going to St. Louis without a designated hitter.

The crowd seemed pretty confident leaving Fenway that night. Before we left, we took pictures in front of the scoreboard with the winning score of 6-2 on it. We knew that this could be the last game at Fenway this year.

Parking, gas and tolls ... \$100. Tickets to two games ... \$290. The Red Sox as World Champions and Yankee apparel on the discount rack at Bob's ... priceless!

Election sickness strikes teen Presidential promises fail to persuade

By ANGELA KOZAK
The Tattoo

I'm so bored with the U.S.A. Joe Strummer wrote those words in 1977 in London. Now, here I am, in Toronto, writing the same words 27 years later. Funny how things change.

Election view '04

Of course, when the lyrics to the Clash classic *I'm So Bored With The U.S.A.* were written, they weren't referring, as I am now, to 43rd President George W. Bush, his cabinet members, or his "war" in Iraq. Nor were they referring to a global media constantly spewing contradicting statements to an already confused public:

There are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

There are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Of course, the latter is true. There are no, nor have there ever been, WMDs in Iraq. The official statement was released earlier this week - over 1,000 American lives too late.

Commander-in-Chief George W. Bush now has two struggles ahead of him: not only does he have to continue trying to form coherent sentences; he has to convince the American people that \$126 billion later, the Iraq war was justified. In the meantime, Presidential hopeful John Kerry is seizing the opportunity to shepherd potential voters to believing Bush is distrustful. And on it goes, this political see-saw, politicians and public bobbing up and down, and moving nowhere.

I suppose it doesn't matter where you're from. London, Toronto, it makes no difference. I can no longer believe anything from the words of the media or the President or the supposed all-knowing CIA. All I can tell you is what Joe Strummer sang 27 years ago: "I'm so bored with the U.S.A. But what can I do?"

By STEFAN KOSKI
The Tattoo

Voting in the upcoming 2004 presidential election will probably be the most important political decision that people will have to make since, well, the last presidential election.

But a lot more is at stake here this time around. The direction that the United States will take in the next four years will, now more than ever, be inherently dependent on who sits at its head.

Two major candidates, with two very different opinions on how to run the country, are vying for the highest position in the land in one of the most heated election campaigns since, well, the last presidential election.

Republican candidate George W. Bush has given plenty of powerful speeches to crowds cheering, "Four more years!" If elected, he has promised to keep his aggressive stance against terrorism. With two countries blasted back to the stone age (where for the most

part they were to begin with), there is little doubt that he will keep that promise if nothing else.

It would be easy to simply label him as a dim-witted, incompetent liar who has taken the country down the tubes, and then call it a day. However, even without such cynicism, the decisions he's made while in office, especially on foreign policy, raise a lot of issues.

Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks, still hasn't been captured. The weapons of mass destruction, which were supposedly in Iraq, were not only never found but now seem to have never existed in the first place. So many things have been blown up in Iraq in the last few months that it can hardly even be called news anymore.

And then there's the Republican Party's refusal to admit that any of it was in any way a mistake.

With such horrible errors already made, surely a regime change would be in order. Surely John Kerry would make a much better president, make much better decisions, and make the world a better place. Surely.

The question is, how exactly is John Kerry planning to do this? What is John Kerry's miracle solution for the problems that plague America?

He has berated President Bush's policies and practices many times, saying that he will do things differently, more effectively, and more efficiently. But the question still stands: how is he going to do this? How can he hunt down and kill terrorists without a war and without putting American soldiers in harm's way?

How is he going to get more allies involved in the war on terror when *The Wall Street Journal* reported last month that France and Germany aren't likely to send troops even if Kerry is elected? How is he going to fund the many government departments that need funding when, as he has pointed out on many occasions, the economy is still a wreck?

A vote for John Kerry is a vote for a safer America, a stronger economy, and a better life for us all. Now if only the Democrats could prove any of that, they'd be all set.

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