

From the Bullpen

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Special Edition

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Boys,

Even though we already posted a *Bullpen* this week, after today's events in Chicago, I felt compelled to add a short bonus edition. It was simply too good a day to keep to myself.

I flew into Chicago this morning for a meeting with a bridge expert in Skokie, in part to prepare him for his deposition next week. After our meeting concluded, I was headed back to the airport in a taxi cab piloted by a crazed Greek gentleman when I suddenly noticed the exit for Wrigley Field. I succumbed to the temptation and instructed my hack to, quick, take the exit and get me to Wrigley to catch today's game. Although my plan had been to get to the airport to try to catch an earlier flight home, the attraction of Wrigley was simply too much; the gravitational pull toward the ivy-covered walls too unrelenting. Like a helpless alcoholic or chain-smoker, my addiction to baseball simply too strong for my weak and small personage.

My driver, Zorba, was taken by surprise, but still managed to make the exit. Unfortunately, to my shock and chagrin, he had absolutely no clue what or where Wrigley Field is, and the poor man barely spoke a word of English. I kid you not on this. Anyway, with the help of sign-language and his satellite-driven locator machine (I'm being technical here), my cabbie was able to get me to that beautiful structure that borders on Waveland Avenue.

I knew from the Cubs' schedule that they had a 1:20 p.m. game today. What I didn't know until I got to the park that they had added a second game against their opponent, the Diamondbacks, to make up a rainout, purportedly the first one in Chicago in eight years. As Mr. Cubbie himself would say, "Let's play two." Even though the first game started in a fairly steady drizzle, the place was packed to the gills with fans on a Thursday afternoon, notwithstanding the fact that the Cubs are in dead last. What an amazing place.

As said, the day was too great to not share it with some of my fellow baseball cranks, so without more, I give you a recap of my

RANDOM THOUGHTS FROM WRIGLEY FIELD, SECTION 122



How lucky is this? A great seat behind home plate, a twin bill, and three beer vendors within arm's reach. Beautiful.



Not sure I have ever before heard "smoke on the water" at a baseball game. Nice touch.



How on Earth does John Mabry (now with the Cubs) stay in the Majors? The guy must be Donald Fehrs' bastard love child. He fans with the bases loaded after looking absolutely helpless on all three swings. How can a guy be positively overmatched throughout the entirety of a twelve-year career, and still have a twelve-year career in the bigs?



This guy across the aisle could be Julius Erving's twin brother. Nice 'do, dude.



I bet this place didn't look that much different in 1932, when the Babe was here for the World Series and hit his famous "called shot" (other than the fact that us guys aren't all wearing black suits and top hats and that there are multiple babes here wearing halter tops).



Man, that first beer went down fast. I'll have to pace myself.



Gee, that guy in Row 8 wolfing down that brät looks more like Shamu than Shamu. No heavy Brut scent, though.



By golly, today is August 3. Jack and Phyllis were married exactly 54 years ago today. I'll drink to that!



Wow, this old boy walking up the aisle toward me has a serious hitch in his git-along. Is that me in 25 years? Or B.T. now?



Hey, Orlando Hudson's up. That's my guy! He plays for the Di-

amondbacks? Good to know. Hopefully that triple he just hit didn't get wasted on my bench.



Wow, that dude over there looks like a seriously pissed-off Mel Gibson. "Hey, Mel? Can I buy you a cocktail?"



Let's see, how can I make this a billable event? Let's go with "*Contemplate case defense strategies and potential trial issues*" for 3.5 hours, Alex. Done. Ticket, afternoon, seven beers, large bag of nuts, one brät, all paid for. Ahhh, I love this country.



Who thinks I'm kidding?



Hmmm, I wonder if Buddy Groom is still pitching?



Man, that last Old Style was sure tasty, time for another. I love my life!



Hey, pal, that is the most gawdoffle Hawaiian shirt I've ever seen. Might as well throw in some dark dress socks to go with those Bermuda shorts and dress shoes, too.



I need to figure out a way to spend every afternoon out here. Is it too late to start a second career as a bobblehead doll vendor?



Maddux should be pitching here, today, not in Chez Ravine. What's right is right.



Three beers down the hatch. The world loves me.



This must be Stretch's favorite park. No lovable furry mascots, no exploding scoreboard, no sausage races. No gimmicky nonsense whatsoever.



Hey, there's another Shamu. They are everywhere.



How do those players run with the bottoms of their uniform pants hanging over the heels of their cleats? Very strange.



What is the score anyway? 9 to 1? When did all that happen? Can you say "bulletproof"?



Okay, this is scary. I'm pretty sure that the beer vendor who sold me my last ale was Vincent Price. I'm not kidding.



Hip-hop music at America's pastime is not acceptable.



Beer No. 4: Gone. Approaching weightlessness.



Oh, I see that former Senator fecal matter Phil Nevin is now a pinch hitter for the Cubs, nice career, palooka. Good luck on the American Legion banquet circuit.



If that isn't Everybody Loves Raymond's mother sitting two rows in front of me, I'll do a Magpie swan dive at the corner of State and Lake.



Oh-for-Three in a 10 to 1 Diamonds win. Nice game, Shekky Green. Is today some holy day that you have decided to take off? Oya.



Just look at Shamu II stuffing down a third brät. *That's* a surprise.



Holy crap, what is Barry White doing selling Budweiser at Wrigley? And what a good lesson he could teach about the virtues of regular flossing.



Jack Elam -- now *there's* a character actor for you.



Man, Conor Jackson (D-backs first sacker) is a stiff. Absolute rigor mortis on that last play.



That "Drink Responsibly" button being flashed by my beer vendor really rankles me. What, I can't be trusted to exercise self-restraint on my own? Okay, good point.



I'll bet a lot of people will be stunned when they find out I turn 50 in October. STUNNED.



Okay, bottom of the ninth, bases juiced, one out, Mabry at the plate. Bet he grounds into a game-ending DP. Yup. Nice call, Skipper.



Final score (Game 1): D-backs 10, Cubs 2. Better dust off your resume, Dusty.



If anyone here has a good reason why I shouldn't flag over the beer vendor for one more frosty, speak now or forever hold your peace. Too late.



Wrigley Field ain't a bad place to sit around and watch people while they clean off the field for the second half of the twin bill. CONES!



I wonder what Screech would be thinking about right now. Probably his blood chum, Skeezix.



If there is a better way to spend an afternoon than at a double-header at Wrigley in 80-degree weather, I want to know.



So Juan Matteo is making his Major League debut, eh? Let's see how he does. Backwards **K**, nice start. How about a toast to Juan?



Henry Blanco is now coaching for the Cubs? Great Caesar's Ghost! He has had more employers than Itchie.



Until so seeing with my own eyes, I would not have guessed that Johnny Estrada was: (1) a Diamondback, nor (2) capable of hitting .317, except for a slow pitch softball team.



Wow, this cotton candy guy could be Snoop Dog's separated at birth twin. Lucky him. Nice braided pigtail look.



I do believe I have time for one more cold one before heading for the El to the Loop, and then the Orange Line to Midway. Invisible is good.

The rest of the afternoon I really don't remember, but it was a great day at the old ballpark.

Skipper