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FENWAY

1912 –

For 112 years, Fenway Park has been responsible for the highest degrees of heartbreak rivaled by the purest forms of elation.

It's a place that gives and takes. A place where dreams either go to thrive, or to die. Where rivalry is ignited and tears are shed. The alluring invitation Fenway has is galactic,

prompting baseball fans from across the world to visit this living museum, a structure holding tightly to the last of its purity and embracing all who enter.

The history nestled between each layer of paint, brick and ricochet of a baseball off the Green Monster is unparalleled and currently stands as the oldest ballpark in Major League Baseball.

In 2012, Fenway Park was enshrined into the list of National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service, "Because of its significance in commemorating the history of the United States of America." Never has any induction been more appropriate.

Through the decades, serving as the premier breeding ground of baseball, memories span generations at Fenway Park. Experiences here enhance the human spirit and prove testament that miracles still exist.

For Bostonians, Fenway is a home. It's a place of refuge from life's mundane. Walking through the gates for a game is a therapy session, orchestrated by smiles, friendship and nostalgia.

It's a place to reunite and reminisce on the past while participating in its future. Fenway Park is tradition, its Americana and a palace to unite around. For Bostonians, its community.

For me, Fenway is a memory, an experience never to be forgotten. And that's exactly what it should be.

A moment that transcends time and is written into history. Participating on the grounds crew there enhanced my life in ways I couldn't have imagined and remains a high point in my life.

Details on my time there are found in this commemorative work along with other perspectives that cross over different experiences at Fenway.

Stories built on memories, new and old. Shared experiences, but different interpretations, truly testifying to the charisma and majesty that is Fenway Park.

Time is an illusion at Fenway Park. Though its future is as uncertain as all of ours, we care for it like our own. Watching as it ages further into its purpose.

HENRY TAVES-

Maintaining purity at Fenway Park

If someone were to search “what’s the greatest World Series game ever,” Game 6 of the 1975 World Series between the Boston Red Sox and Cincinnati Reds would be the answer. Beyond a star-studded roster of characters and franchise legends on each side, the series is widely considered the best world series ever played.

It was October 21 and Henry Taves was there in person, but he was always destined to be there. Baseball was a commonality in the Taves home. After leaving New York the same way the Dodgers did, the Taves moved to Boston and settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where they’d find their new hometown team. As an infant and throughout his early years, Taves’ parents steered his heart towards Fenway Park,

home of the Boston Red Sox. By 1963, at just 8 years old, Henry would cross the Charles River and catch his first game beyond the gates at Fenway.

“I went up the ramp somewhere behind home plate close to the first base line,” Taves said. “My first impression of Fenway was how amazingly green the field was. That was true for me because we didn’t have colored television when I grew up; it was all black and white.”

Beyond the blades of grass, Taves can recall another intrinsic variable at Fenway – the organist. From 1953 to 1989, John Kiley provided the only entertainment offered at Fenway besides the game. Kiley would grace Fenway with the keys of a Hammond x66 organ before

the game, between innings, after a home run and after the game.

During the 1960s, the Red Sox were plagued with losing records and by 1966, they had secured their eighth consecutive losing season, finishing ninth out of ten teams. Fenway was under scrutiny, aging into its 55th year of play just as much as the team was. In the ensuing 1967 season, the Sox miraculously won the pennant for the first time since 1946. Led by left fielder Carl Yastrzemski, the Red Sox played their way into the franchise’s first World Series since 1918, playing against the St. Louis Cardinals.

“My parents wouldn’t let me see the World Series,” Taves said. “I was in eighth grade and had to go to school. They played day games

back then and while some of my classmates got to go catch a game, I wasn’t so lucky.”

Summers in New Hampshire would keep Taves from Fenway the following years, despite his father buying season tickets in 1968 and 1969.

Taves stuck around Cambridge, eventually attending Harvard for his undergraduate studies, catching whatever games he could while strolling across the Charles. The Red Sox wouldn’t reach the World Series again until 1975 and with Taves still in town, he made sure not to miss a home game. He attended games one, two and six at Fenway Park, catching two wins.

“That Game 6 is probably the most important game I’ve ever attended,” Taves said. “It was so memorable, well-known and an incredible game. Seeing Fisk’s homer hitting the foul pole in the 12-inning was so cool.”

While studying applied physics at Harvard, between his freshman and sophomore years there, Taves got a job in historic preservation in Harrisville, New Hampshire.

“I didn’t go into the sciences after college,” Taves said. “After a couple in-between years, I went to Columbia University, where my father had been and received my Master’s in historic preservation. That background studying the built environment and enjoying historic buildings and structures of all types is part of what makes me love Fenway Park.”

Since becoming a historic preservationist, Taves has pursued preserving Fenway Park to the highest degree of originality—the ‘70s, where Taves referred to Fenway as its “purist form.” Taves has since initiated a blog to share intimate details about Fenway, appropriately dubbed “The Fenway Purist.”

Throughout the blog, fans and historians can find seating analyses for each grandstand section, behind-the-scenes photography, detailed contrasts of Fenway through the decades, new updates about changes throughout Fenway, inside looks at the Green Monster and much more.

“You can’t preserve everything the way it was,” Taves said. “You’ve got to have different kinds of music to please generations and Josh Kanter can play anything on the

creeping into 2002, a 23-foot-tall net was situated above the wall, corralling any home runs ticketed for an exit to Lansdowne Street. The following season, 269 seats were placed atop the 37-foot wall in left field, providing new sights of Fenway for fans of all ages. Since then, the Green Monster seats are constantly mentioned as some of, if not the greatest, seats in any sporting venue.

“When I was a kid, that was just a wall with a screen on top,” Taves

“FENWAY PARK NEEDS TO BE VIABLE. IT MUST SURVIVE ECONOMICALLY AS WELL AS PHYSICALLY.”

organ. The players want modern things too, like celebrations and other cheerleading effects.” Multiple renovations and initiatives have been undertaken at Fenway Park over the decades to usher in more contemporary and suitable accommodations.

“There are many things you can do to older buildings,” Taves said. “Fenway Park needs to be viable. It must survive economically as well as physically. Fenway had to change, but what I like about it is in almost every case, the changes have been respectful to the structure.”

The wall in left field has been around since Fenway’s opening in April 1912. A manual scoreboard was incorporated two years later and has been there ever since. In 1947, Red Sox owner Tom Yawkey removed the ads on the wall and painted it green — the birth of the Green Monster. For 66 years,

said. “The wall is still there, which is great. It was my fantasy as a kid to climb that ladder and see what it was like on top, so now people can be up there and live out that fantasy and see what it’s like. They did it in such a way that, as a historic preservationist, I’m pleased with.”

For some time at Fenway Park, the only visible advertisement was on the right field roof just above grandstands one and two, reading, “REMEMBER THE JIMMY FUND,” the team’s official charity. Founded in Boston in 1948 to fight childhood cancer, it has remained an integral part of Fenway’s history ever since.

Taves has been to all 30 current Major League Baseball parks and none exhibit more individual advertisements visible to the stands than Fenway.

“Advertising pays a lot of the bills,” Taves said. “Good players



Taves (right) with a family at Fenway Park while performing ambassador responsibilities. Photo credit: Catherine Martin

are expensive and fans want good players.”

Fast forward to today, Taves ultimately aligns his allegiance to Fenway Park more than his hometown team.

“I see fans comment on articles if the team isn’t doing well,” Taves said. “They say, ‘Don’t go to Fenway, show the owners they’ve got to spend money on a good team to get us there.’ My feeling is that I love being at Fenway Park either way. I just love being there. The team changes, the teams are good, sometimes bad, but Fenway Park goes on and I just enjoy being there wrapped in that experience.”

Recently, Taves has taken up the role of volunteer ambassador at Fenway, where he helps create lifelong memories for those who interact with ambassadors.

Thirty games a year reel Taves to Fenway, where he constantly shares knowledge and stories with the masses. An average shift finds Taves patrolling around the grounds, watching for families who arrive early and other opportunities to make someone’s day. After each game, Taves sends a detailed report to the chief experience officer, Sarah McKenna, who worked closely with Janet Marie Smith during Fenway’s renovations in the mid-2000s.

Taves thrives on the joy radiating on the faces of people he interacts with. Through his ambassador activities, fans get the opportunity to see things at Fenway they otherwise would never have known existed. On occasion, Taves surprises fans with opportunities to walk across the top of the Green Monster during games, bring families in early, upgrade standing room for fans and in rare cases, help with wedding proposals.

“I was sitting in grandstand 31 during a game,” Taves said. “A young man, in a group of six, whispered to me that he planned to propose to his intended fiancée

during the game and asked if I had any suggestions. I said, ‘How about on top of the Monster?’ I went up to ask Security if I could bring six fans up for a surprise wedding proposal and was told, ‘For that, sure!’ So, a few innings later, I took them upstairs and onto the Monster and the proposal happened successfully and all were happy.”

Alongside ambassador responsibilities, Taves will maintain his passion for historical preservation alongside Fenway Park.

From time to time, Taves sends inquiries about Fenway to fan services and entertainment to help maintain its purity. Most notable was one concerning the error light on the Green Monster scoreboard. In the late ‘90s, the error light was changed to green from red.

“Errors are bad,” Taves said. “I wrote that they’d got to put the red light back in there and turn the hits green and around 2012, they did.”

Additionally, when teams come to visit Fenway, metal plaques are hung on the scoreboard of the Green Monster right above “BOSTON.” Taves wrote about the visiting team’s abbreviations, imploring that they be changed back to their original spelling. At some point through the 90s or 2000s, line scores were changed to represent “tricode” abbreviations such as “NYY” or “NYM” to distinguish between the Yankees and Mets or the CWS and CHC for the White Sox and Cubs.

“Back in the 1960s-1970s, the line score had NEW YORK, CHICAGO, MINN, CLEVE, BALT, among others,” Taves said. “Before the 2017 season, resulting from my letter to Sarah McKenna and John Carter, head of Red Sox Productions, those were changed back to the traditional format.”

Eight years ago, Taves was sitting in section 27 of the grandstand during the year-end fan appreciation week, during which ushers and staff

members gave out prizes and hosted other events around the park. One prize offered was for two fans to be picked to go inside the Green Monster during a game. Taves was picked with another fan and escorted under the left-field stands to the Yaz Gate, emptying into left field.

“Before our usher pressed the door to open the Yaz gate, I begged them to let me do it,” Taves said. “They said they weren’t supposed to, but they let me. I’m probably the only fan to open the Yaz gate during the middle of a game.”

During the inning, the Sox secured hits and runs. Taves was granted permission to slide numbers into the scoreboard for the Green Monster, cementing another memorable experience. The unknown that precedes each game is what excites Taves, as both a fan and ambassador at Fenway Park. Being able to experience the unknown of the game with the fans and create new memories for fans.

Fenway provides a glimpse into the past for all. Tourists, fans, first-timers, old-timers. It’s a place for everyone. It’s watching baseball in a place that isn’t ruined by intense amounts of modern propaganda to “make noise” or in-your-face graphics when a strike was thrown.

Red Sox fans know when to make noise. They recognize the moments. Fans know the count. So often, high-intensity graphics, lights and noise plague the serenity of the game dynamic and strip away from the peace between the dirt and grass.

“Fenway is a place that is less spoiled,” Taves said.

The oldest and perhaps the last of such places.



Photo credit: Chandler Doerr

PETER ABRAHAM-

Covering all the bases

Why is Peter Abraham a journalist? He had no intention of becoming one. When Abraham was a sophomore in high school, his father pushed him to develop a plan for his future and join the junior achievement club on campus. There, he got to tour the local newspaper and meet the sports journalist.

"I walked up to him and mentioned how good the swim team was," Abraham said. "He told me to call in the scores from the meets and I went right to the coach, but he said he didn't have time, so he had me do it. He gave me the sheet; I kept scores and called it into the newspaper."

The next day, the newspaper published his story about the swim team and a year later, Abraham found himself pulling quotes from three swimmers from the state meet for the newspaper. Shortly after the publication, Abraham found a letter with ten bucks for his efforts and a job offer the following fall, fulfilling his father's plan. From answering phone calls to covering local sporting events,

Abraham would go on and cover the University of Connecticut and their countless tourney runs through the '90s from 1986-99. Following Connecticut, Abraham took a position covering the New York Mets before taking the subway from Queens to the Bronx to cover the Yankees. Since then, Abraham has been a Major League Baseball columnist for The Boston Globe, where he quietly covers the ins and outs of the Boston Red Sox.

"Covering the Yankees is a lot like covering the Red Sox," Abraham said. "Popular teams, passionate fan bases, good teams, star players. Covering the Mets, that was different. There was so much wacky stuff with the Mets; it prepared me for covering the Yankees and the Sox."

By the time Abraham reached the Fenway Park press box, Terry Francona had brought two World Series championships to Boston.

"When I had the opportunity to come here, it was an easy decision," Abraham said. "Being closer to my family, seeing them

grow up, it's been great to be home."

In 2013, John Farrell took over as manager of the Boston Red Sox. In a season fueled by emotion from April's Boston Marathon bombing, the Red Sox powered their way to their twelfth World Series appearance.

After winning Game 5 in St. Louis on the backs of starting pitcher Jon Lester and reliever Koji Uehara, the Red Sox returned to Boston up three games to two. It had been 95 years since the Sox clinched a World Series at Fenway Park and coming off two straight wins on the road, no time was better than the present.

In the bottom of the third, Sox outfielder Shane Victorino broke open the game in front of 38,447 fans with a three-run double off the Green Monster.

"Here at Fenway, Victorino's three-run double is my most memorable experience," Abraham said. "The press box started to shake. It was so loud. With everything that

happened in Boston that year and the team being unexpectedly great, it was special what that team did and hearing the joy in the Park is something I'll always remember. You only get that in certain parks, Fenway being one of them."

The Sox went on ousting St. Louis 6-1, winning their eighth World Series title that night and gracing the fans at Fenway with a clinch at home for the first time since 1918.

Baseball has been a generational interest in Abraham's family. His grandfather, his uncle and his dad were baseball players. Today, Abraham covers roughly 135 games a year for the Boston Globe and produces at least one column daily while keeping notes on games.

When Abraham is up in the press box, work takes precedence as the game reels him in to create his content. Newer technologies, such as analytics and fan graphs, have changed how games are recorded. In 2003, the Boston Red Sox front office signed a Dominican-American player named David Ortiz. He would later go on to become "Big Papi."

On October 17, 2004, the Red Sox were down 3-0 and facing elimination at Fenway Park against their goliath rival Yankees in the American League Championship Series. With the game tied 4-4 in the bottom of the 12, no outs and a runner on first, Big Papi stepped into the batter's box. After working a 2-1 count, Ortiz lifted a home run into the visitor's bullpen, giving the Red Sox the faith needed to keep their postseason hopes alive and securing him as ALCS MVP. They would win the next three games, becoming the first team to return from 0-3, landing them in the World Series, where they would win in four games – for the first time in 86 years.

Throughout the remaining 14 years with the club, Ortiz would prove a constant and key piece to the

franchise, aiding in the 2007 World Series with a .333 average and again in 2013 with a whopping .688 average, going 11/16 at the plate with 7 runs batted in, amassing 8 intimidating walks, slugging 1.188 and two tip-of-the-hat home runs — securing, of course, his only World Series MVP and lifelong discussion of all time. He would retire in 2016 with a wrap sheet long enough to drape Cooperstown and eventually be inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2022. For Abraham, covering Ortiz in his final triumphant years at Fenway proved to be his favorite among all players.

"One man content," Abraham said. "So many great things, he's got a big personality. There'd be days when I wasn't sure what to write about, so I'd write David. Nobody was sadder when he retired than I was; there was always something going on with David."

Abraham and Ortiz got along well, proving friends when Abraham accompanied Ortiz to the Dominican, helped with his Hall-of-Fame induction and ultimately became the player Abraham covered most at Fenway. When Abraham needed him, Ortiz was there, the same way he is for Boston.

Fenway has been Abraham's office for 15 years, a place he has been coming to all his life.

"I felt lucky to see a sporting event and get paid," Abraham said. "Originally, I just wanted to work at my hometown paper and one thing led to another along the way. To ever get the chance to come to Fenway and cover a game just once, I would've been happy."

The history at Fenway is unparalleled and Abraham recognizes that.

"You walk where Ted Williams

walked," Abraham said. "Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle. The clubhouse is the same place where so many great players dressed. At Fenway, the great players played here. I remember asking my dad where Peter Gammons sits and he pointed up at the press box and I thought to myself, 'Wow that must be cool, see everything from up there' and since I've sat with him up there and try not to lose sight of how cool it is to work here."

As Fenway ages into its 112 year, the future of its functionality is uncertain. Through various renovations in the early 2000s, Fenway is expected to be structurally sound until 2062, according to renowned architect Janet Marie Smith. Until then, Abraham remains optimistic about Fenway and open to future possibilities.

"At some point they'll have to figure something out, whoever it is," Abraham said. "I hope whatever they do, new Fenway or not, they keep or build the same dimensions as they are now at Fenway. I think if there were some upgrades, they would be received by fans eventually."

Fenway memories began for Abraham with his father, parking across from gate B. Now, he leaves the press box, passing by memories of legend.

"I remember exactly where we parked," Abraham said. "Now, parking across from gate B to go to work is a strange thing. I don't have an office or a desk here; I have a mailbox. My office is a seat in the press box. I learned how to score a game here; it's weird looking back on that, but I try not to lose sight of it all."



Abraham (right) with his father and nephew at Fenway Park during the 2018 World Series. Photo credit: Peter Abraham





CAM JURY- First-time for new Fenway faithful



Jury and her boyfriend together at her first game at Fenway. Photo credit: Cam Jury

Cam Jury has finally made it to Fenway Park. After growing up in the coastal town of Portland, Maine, the New England native had recently moved to Boston and added 'Fenway Park' to her Boston bucket list.

After graduating from Gettysburg College, Jury has found a new job working in communication for the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, where she has been for just six months. This is her first time living in a major U.S. city.

"It's been an adjustment," Jury said. "Having Google Maps up and navigating the green and red line has been intimidating, but I'm slowly starting to get the hang of things. Boston is special; the people here are close because they want to be here."

Boston has opened itself to Jury while growing into her own. With the underlying intentional beauty nestled between the streets, oozing with history, Jury has found a new appreciation for the city.

Jury was exposed to the Red Sox all her life. Her father had always talked about going to Fenway, but

it was never meant to be. "I didn't know much about the Red Sox and Fenway growing up," Jury said. "But it was always there in the background my whole life in Maine."

Leading up to her first game at Fenway, Jury experienced butterflies as she and her friends awaited their game. Having parents who talked about going all her life, it was the beginning of a full circle moment.

As the day of the game rolled around, Jury had only had baseball experience with the Portland Seadogs and was moving up the professional ladder. With limited knowledge, Fenway loomed as a daunting building constructed upon history and community.

"I just didn't know what to expect," Jury said. "I was so excited to go through and see what happened. I got a Fenway Frank and loved the views inside."

While catching her first game, Jury went with Gettysburg alumni through a networking event and tickets gifted by her mother. Jury caught up with an old roommate

who's a seasoned visitor to Fenway and her boyfriend Ronnie.

"It was so much more fun than I could've hoped," Jury said. "Being there with friends and winning a hat from MLB bingo was so fun."

The staff was kind when I asked questions and singing 'Sweet Caroline' was awesome. It all zoomed by so fast."

While Jury settles into Boston and summer baseball peaks, Fenway and its magic again smashes expectations from a newly initiated New Englander.



“What does **FENWAY** mean to you?”

115 years worth between the staff

“It’s history. It’s always a lot of fun and is a pleasure. Such an iconic place in the city of Boston. The people that visit from all over the world are blown away by the atmosphere here. Fenway is awesome.”

- Bill Finn, **8** seasons at **FENWAY**

“It’s goosebumps everyday. Seeing people come from all over the world and getting to watch their expressions when they come up the ramp and see everything for the first time is awesome. Fenway means everything. Being here in the 2018 season was incredible. The team was so good and would always come back and win games!”

- Tony, **10** seasons at **FENWAY**

“It’s magical here. I came here when I was seven or eight and I feel that way again every time I walk into the park. That same little kid walking up the ramp and seeing the grass and the Green Monster. That feeling never goes away and I think most of us who work here feel that way about Fenway. It’s just a great place. Being here makes me appreciate baseball again.”

Dan Sweeney, **2** seasons at **FENWAY**



Photo credit: Chandler Doerr

“I’ve come here all my life, as a kid and now as an adult. It’s always a lot of fun. The comeback from 2004 was great to witness. Fenway is classic.”

- Bob, **25** seasons at **FENWAY**

“I’m a rookie and I’ve enjoyed it so far. Interaction with the fans is top-notch. They’re so knowledgeable. I’m a baseball fan and have been since I was a child and getting the opportunity to work here has been a real thrill. The first time I came here, goosebumps ran up and down my back for two minutes. I’ve been here hundreds of times as a fan and it’s a worthwhile job. Meeting the newcomers who light up being here has been a pleasure. Sharing the history and stories about Fenway with them is what makes this fun. They might not even like baseball, but they want to know about Fenway and its history. It’s a must in Boston. It’s loaded with history and is a gem of a ballpark. Thinking about all the players who trod on the field since 1912, Babe Ruth, Ted Williams, Yaz, Rice, Evans, you could go down the list. It’s a living museum and they’ve done a fantastic job upgrading everything. It’s so different here and there’s history around every corner.”

- Shane Hogan, **1** season at **FENWAY**

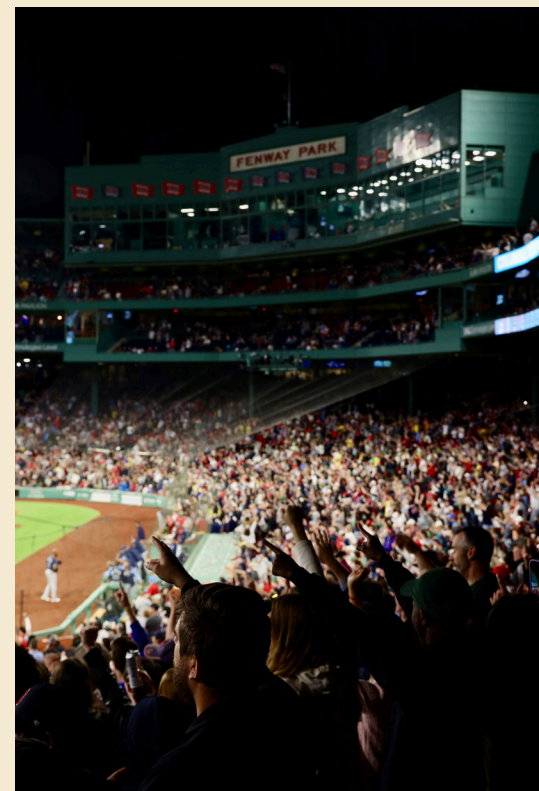


Photo credit: Chandler Doerr

“Fenway is an escape from the real world. People are happy, they’re together and root for the team here. People come here to get away from the mundane and experience something new. It’s therapy for me. I wouldn’t stick around as long as I have if I didn’t like it. I’m lucky to have this opportunity. Nobody leaves either. There were guys here who had been here 57 years when I started and now I’m one of them. I’ll stay as long as I can, God willing. I told them once I would do this for nothing. Fenway is out of this world. Seeing the smiles from fans and people here never gets old. That’s the greatest thing to see. They’re here to see everything and I understand that. It’s been beautiful.”

- John Basmajian, **57** seasons at **FENWAY**

“I grew up less than a mile from here. By the time I was 11, we knew how to sneak into this park. I love baseball, Fenway and the history behind it. One day, I was at a game looking around and noticed how many people work here. I knew I had to look into it. A couple of months later, I was working here and I’ll do it as long as it’s fun. Fenway Park is an icon. Just seeing people’s faces light up when they come here is great. The fans here love baseball. They know the count and they’re in the game. It’s such a baseball-frenzied place. It’s iconic.”

- Louise Sacco, **12** seasons at **FENWAY**



Bennion and his daughter visiting Fenway Park. Photo credit: Mark Bennion



MARK BENNION- Where past, present and future meet

Turning over a baseball card is turning a page in history for Mark Bennion. Collecting was never about financial remuneration for him, it was about looking at the back and stepping into the record books. Reading the statistics and stories that each career has to offer.

"I've got here, probably 100 cards from the Red Sox," Mark Bennion said. "Looking on the back and seeing how many wins Dennis' Oil Can' Boyd had, 16 wins in '86. To me, that's fascinating. I love it for the statistics. To read about Yaz on his card and the push he had in '67 and how the team came so close that year."

For Bennion, it started like all the others – with his youth. Through friends of his older brother, Bennion was gifted some baseball cards, which he has had ever since, igniting a passion for stat keeping. After some brief years in pee-wee and coach pitch, Bennion realized his fascination with what he could not do.

"I played but wasn't a very good hitter," Bennion said. "I wasn't a very good outfielder, but I followed

baseball. The season was long and since I collected cards, it was always so interesting."

Alongside card collecting, baseball's excitement lies in its unpredictability for Bennion: the possibility, the unknown, the next pitch, the ball hurtling through the air, ricocheting off the wall with a mind of its own.

Fenway Park's dimensions are primed for such unpredictability. It boasts the closest distance to an outfield wall (310' in left and 302' in right), the tallest outfield wall (37'2") and the shortest outfield wall (3'), all nestled in one park.

"There's a monster of a wall in left field," Bennion said. "And if you hit it over the wall, you get in touch with the miraculous – the divine." In 2013, Bennion found himself in Boston participating in the Teaching Professor Conference and mulling among his colleagues about catching a game at Fenway.

"We have to go," Bennion said.

Sitting in right field, Bennion was placed directly in the middle of the unknown, witnessing an inside-

the-park home run and a suicide squeeze, both rare, saluting the unpredictability between the pitches.

"I took a photo of all the retired numbers," Bennion said. "Fisk, Pesky, Rice, Doerr and so on. Seeing those numbers and thinking of the tradition that lasted with each of them, the Ted Williams saga and how long that lasted. I think someone like Fred Lynn, even though he went and played for the Angels after the Sox, in his heart of heart, is a Red Sox because he felt something about that community at Fenway – loyal, honest, brutal. You feel the range of emotion there, the hate, the admiration."

Indeed, all emotions are felt at Fenway Park. From the sunshine splendor of opening day to the rain delay peppered with thunder, all the way to the season's final game, fans like none other flock to Fenway to feel experience history.

"It's galactic," Bennion said. "Fenway reaches to the far ends of the United States. Places like that remind me of a time when baseball was more intimate and how it can still be intimate. Fenway represents

that intimacy you otherwise don't see in these other stadiums. Fenway represents the love of the game."

As decades precede each other and Fenway adapts, fans like Bennion fear commercialization strips from the essence of the game and the power of tradition. With Fenway and Wrigley, the sense of history is paramount and powerful.

"I would hate to see Fenway go," Bennion said. "If it goes, the business side wins and history loses."

In a place like Fenway, history is everywhere you look. Pesky Pole, Fisk Pole, the Green Monster, the 86-year-old wooden seats through the grandstand and the championship banners across the press box.

The Red Sox Hall of Fame, the retired numbers, the secrets of the Green Monster.

"If a team isn't in touch with some of that history," Bennion said, "you lose some of your mojo

and start to play the game for extrinsic reasons. I hope it will stay around forever. It's good for us to stay connected to the past; if we become too modern, we lose some of it."

Iconic moments like the 1975 World Series are no stranger to Fenway Park.

Ted Williams' 502-foot home run in 1946, the 1999 All-Star Game, brawls between the Yankees and Red Sox, Games 4 and 5 of the 2004 ALCS, a Clay Bucholtz no-hitter and a 2013 World Series clincher.

"What I love about Fenway is that there have been so many iconic moments," Bennion said. "Those moments touch what's the highest within us. We see what is possible and recognize that miracles still exist."

Bennion is currently sharing his love of baseball with his children at home. He enjoys keeping track of his team, the Milwaukee Brewers, teaching Sports Literature, Writing and Reasoning Foundations and Poetry to students at BYU-Idaho.

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Photo credit: Chandler Doerr

“What does **FENWAY** mean to you?”



From the fans

☺ “A second home for me. When I come back here, I love it. Seeing games and being with friends.”

☺ “There’s few distractions here and everyone is engaged. The best fans are here and it’s the best environment. Fenway is pure Americana.”

☺ “This is my second home. I love Fenway Park!”

☺ “It’s a sense of nostalgia. It always feels good being here with friends.”



☺ “It’s the epitome of Boston, we love it.”



☺ “We all grew up coming here, moved away and it’s our first day back to Boston together and this is where we came. We love being here. It’s community and tradition all in one place!”

☺ “It’s family. I think of all the memories I’ve had with my family when I come here.”

Photo credit: Chandler Doerr

NICK MORREALE- Catching his future

A wife, a 3-year-old daughter, a seasoned dog, a full-time position teaching English as a second language, a side hustle coaching baseball to 12-year-olds and 17-year-olds, earning his master's in organizational leadership and a baby on the way. This is life for Nick Morreale, the 37-year-old father, son, brother, coach, student, teacher and former Italian National team member.

In 1965, Morreale's father graduated high school in Chicago and was scouted by the Boston Red Sox. As most baseball stories go, injury derailed his potential after deciding to go to college before the big leagues and never made it. At a young age, Morreale saw his father's love for America's favorite pastime and how his affinity was passed on to the next generation. By the time Morreale was 16, he'd started getting looks from professional teams and colleges. Baseball was the gasoline, the motivator, everything to him. Baseball was stitching his life together inning by inning.

Simultaneously, during Morreale's high school career, the Red Sox had just won the World Series for the first time in 86 years in 2004. Hailing from Chicago, Morreale grew up a Cubs fan and was all too familiar with the tortured past shared between the Red Sox and Cubs. Although admittedly, Morreale respected the brand of baseball practiced in Boston. Embracing the “dirtbag” and “Idiot baseball.”

“For me, that was a golden era of baseball,” Morreale said. “I loved it. I fell in love with baseball in 1998 with the home run race between McGwire and Sosa. I was a kid during that time, just collecting baseball cards. I knew everybody's name and number and I knew the stats; it was unbelievable. I just grew up around the game.”

With his father and brothers, the American experience with baseball propelled Morreale into his future, eating and breathing it the whole way through.

Having two older brothers in the house, a competitive nature brewed inside Morreale.

“I wanted to be better than them when I caught up to them,” Morreale said. “Being better than they were at 16 or 18. But I was often overmatched.”

Morreale's brother, eight years his senior, would often pluck him from his friends just to catch him while he practiced. Initially annoyed, Morreale later realized the lessons given to him in diligence and discipline necessary to craft a solid potential came from his older brother and harvested them at a younger age, eventually mirroring and superseding his brother's skill in the years to come. Morreale was drafted out of high school, but the offer was rejected.

Moving onto junior college and eventually landing at Arizona State University, Morreale experienced firsthand the ebb and flow nestled in a growing baseball career. Within the first year in Arizona, Morreale had to sit out a year, having transferred and getting cut in the spring after playing through fall. Carefully managing his time and skill, Morreale started playing independent ball, keeping his skills tuned and found himself catching bullpen for the Colorado Rockies for two years.

“I was convinced by players and coaches in the organization to keep playing,” Morreale said. “I got a chance to play in Europe in the Italian League for five seasons, met my wife, moved to Denmark, hung ‘em up for a year and after COVID, played my last two seasons. I got to travel everywhere and played in the World Baseball Classic and the Premier 12. I'm incredibly fortunate to have my unique history with baseball.”

When Morreale's wife started her second doctorate in Denmark, he knew it was time to do something different. With their first child, the



Morreale and his family on Italian Night at Fenway Park. Photo credit: Nick Morreale



Morreale catching for the Italian National team. Photo credit: Nick Morreale

Morreale leapt to New England where they had no prior friends, families, a newborn baby and a lost job. Out of necessity, Morreale looked desperately for coaching positions but came across none, landing himself in the heart of Boston at Fenway Park on the grounds crew for the summer.

Settling into the grounds crew, Morreale would become familiar with baseball operations from the ground up as he would begin part-time work in the oldest stadium in major league baseball. Through the summer, Morreale would balance home life and life at Fenway, eventually bringing his wife and daughter for a family day in the park.

At summer's end, Framingham State came calling and Morreale joined the coaching staff and eventually helped bring their first-ever MASCAC championship to Framingham. More opportunities presented themselves through friends from the Framingham State coaching staff, including coaching at the Garciaparra Baseball Group, where Morreale coaches today.

"It's been an interesting transition, going from player to coach," Morreale said. "You don't realize how much thought goes into practice plans, putting people in the right positions, making tough decisions and communicating with families."

Morreale's biggest challenge transitioning into coaching was

going down the scale he'd batt so hard to ascend.

"I fought so hard to climb the ladder," Morreale said. "To get into 17-year-old travel baseball and then trying 12-year-old travel baseball... remembering all the steps and where those checkpoints are in the development cycle. I've enjoyed coaching the 12 rules more than anything; connecting to the game at that level has been so refreshing."

Despite descending the ladder, Morreale recognizes his luck in the game. Getting to walk away on his own accord proved healthy and secure, while most players are forced to hang up their cleats because they can't find anywhere else to play.

When it comes down to it, baseball is changing. The game isn't what it was. The rapid change began with the introduction of technology. The high-speed cameras in the 90s, the analyzing of swings and even over-correction of swings. With the addition of technological advances, perhaps the game loses other aspects. The touch. The intuition. The feel. Morreale is experiencing this firsthand while coaching.

"I practice throwing the ball around the infield with my 12-year-olds," Morreale said. "It's called a little 'hop,' you know, a little flow, a little feel of the game, a

little rhythm, little 'hey, let it go, a little snap.' That part of the game is almost completely lost and to an old school guy like maybe my father, that's heartbreaking because, like, that is the marrow of the game."

Deliberately incorporating tradition and practicing feel and rhythm has become a peak focus for Morreale while coaching the next generation.

Beyond coach Morreale is a higher goal and with the acquisition of his master's in organizational leadership, Morreale hopes to climb a different ladder to general manager. Variables in knowledge and experience are emphasized in Morreale's resume, including prime lessons from Fenway Park.

"Participating in the work that goes on down there is awesome," Morreale said. "Seeing the inner workings of how communication with the umpires goes down and navigating the weather, ultimately the view of baseball operations. I'm building my resume to do something in the front office there, so not just learning the grounds crew but the inner workings of baseball operations, in general, has been tremendously valuable to me."

In the ensuing months and with graduation looming, Morreale is pressing on in his quest to fulfill his general manager dreams.



Morreale pulling tarp with the Fenway Park Grounds Crew. Photo credit: Jay Ballard



Photo credit: Chandler Doerr

JAY BALLARD-

Finding the magic

It would be impossible for Jay Ballard to express any nostalgia towards Fenway Park. Namely because he never knew it existed in the first place. While searching on Boston University's summer employment page, a grounds position popped-up. Ballard had previous landscaping experience and needed a job. Little did he know it would be the ride it has been.

At the beginning of his first year, Ballard became exposed to passionate fans and native Bostonians who knew anything there was to know about not only Fenway Park, but also the Boston Red Sox.

"I knew nothing, not even the curse," Ballard said. "I had to learn all the history from scratch. When people talk about the magic of Fenway, I would kind of think to myself, 'sure if this was your thing that you had been a part of for your whole life and your dad and grandfather and so on, then I could definitely see how people would feel that way, but all I could think was that this was just my job.'"

By the end of that first summer, Ballard didn't feel that way anymore. It was more than a job. Becoming more exposed to the games, crowds, grass, clay and the Green Monster towering in left field, he began to see something for the first time. He was starting to see the magic, beginning to understand. The magic of course, was always there, but requires a change in perspective to begin to understand.

As a duty of any diligent member of the Fenway Park Grounds Crew, tarping the field is a common practice to protect the playing

surface from the elements. The tarp weighs approximately two tons and requires power to push, grit to get going, communication to coordinate, grace to place and endurance to end.

"Towards the end of my first summer, there was a rain delay," Ballard said. "We pulled the tarp and didn't have to pin it, but we stood there holding it down in the rain. They started playing Purple Rain and everyone's singing. I looked around at my coworkers and the fans in the grandstand and had this feeling come over. It was borderline spiritual and I felt so connected to humanity. The people that have been here, are here now and will be in the future."

That was the turning point for Ballard, as he became fully aware of the lore and attraction that epitomizes Fenway Park. No matter the lack of background knowledge or upbringing as a youth, Ballard and anyone alike, can experience this momentous power that Fenway park has.

Working through his third season, Ballard is embracing the safety and serenity found within its gates.

"There's few places where

emotions can sway and it all be okay," Ballard said. "You can be happy on the sunniest days and miserable on the wettest ones. You never have to pretend to be happy at Fenway because we're all experiencing the same thing and I love that about it. It's all very authentic."

Since starting on the Grounds Crew, Ballard has grown to appreciate those around him and the constant ebb and flow found in the environment.

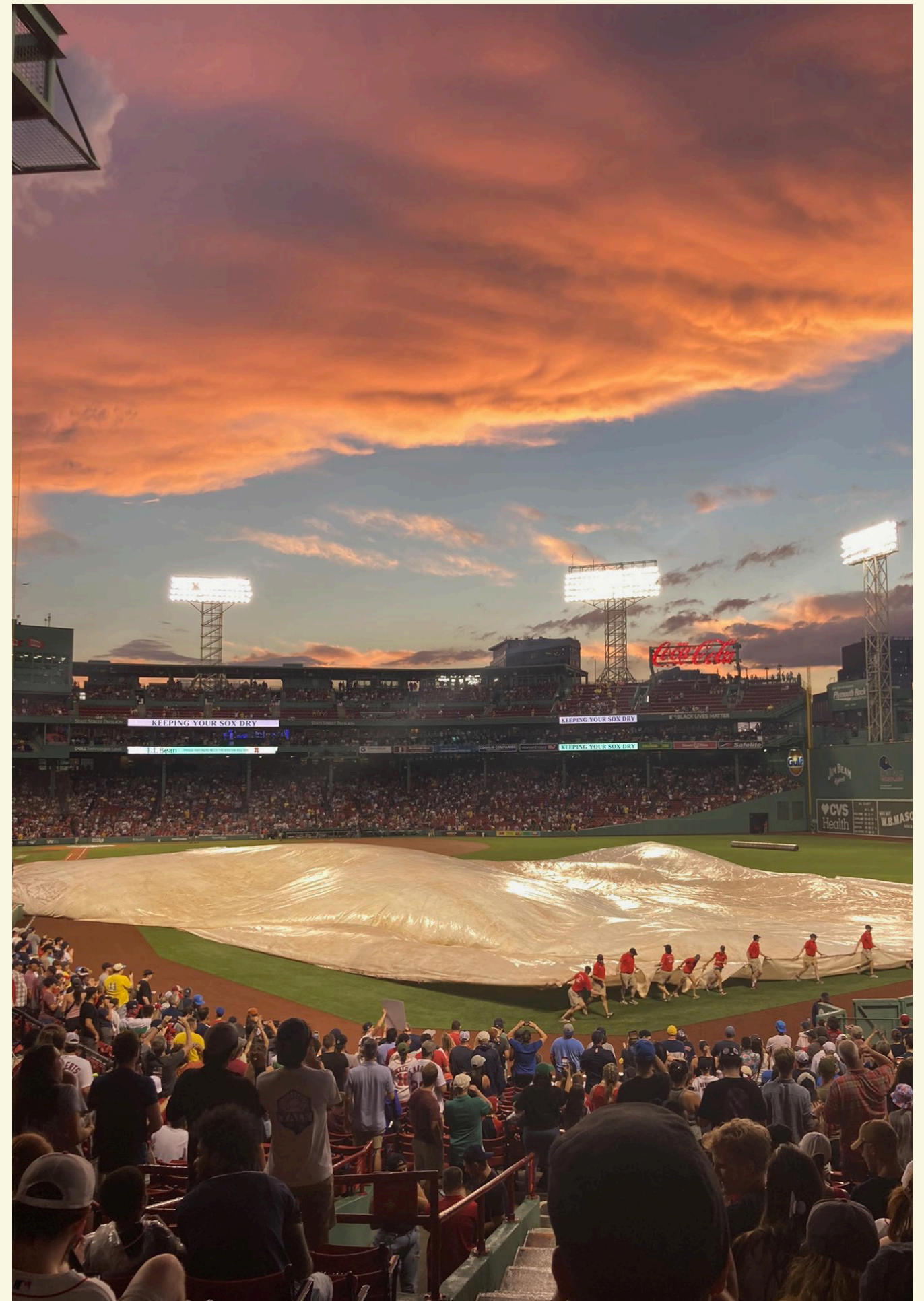
"I think that I love them more than they love me, but that doesn't bother me," Ballard said. "The people are just as much a part of the place as anything else."

Working at Fenway Park for three seasons now, Ballard has learned to embrace the unknown that comes with the territory. Trusting those around him to work through things together as a unit, constantly purifying Fenway's playing field to the purist of detail.

"We have to take care of each other," Ballard said. "It's a culture that's grown into people checking in on each other and making sure we're all ok and we need it. That's the Fenway effect."



Ballard (center) sprinting across the tarp during a rain delay. Photo credit: Jay Ballard



Ballard and the Fenway Park Grounds Crew unveiling the tarp. Photo credit: Jay Ballard

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Growing up, I was not a Red Sox fan. My mother was from Philadelphia and my father was from the Bronx. I was 12 when my father told me we had baseball royalty in our blood. It flowed from Boston, not Philadelphia or the Bronx.

Bobby Doerr met my grandfather two or three times, or so the story goes. According to legend, my grandfather was on a flight and happened to share rows with the Red Sox Hall-of-Famer. They spoke throughout the flight and from what I've heard, they "Concluded they were related somewhere down the line."

Heaven knows that was good enough for me. Robert Pershing Doerr played for the Boston Red Sox his entire career from 1937 to 1951, with a leave of absence in 1945 to serve in World War II. He patrolled second base, which I played as a kid, so it all checks out.

Getting to Boston for the first time only took another five years. It was October and Fenway was under cosmetic reconstruction for college football's Fenway Bowl. It was beautiful, but the missing diamond subtracted from the lore.

My next arrival at the hallowed grounds would be in October 2021, four years after my first visit.

It had been six weeks since my father's death and 13 years since we had a catch in our backyard. He was on my mind. Baseball was filling the void.

I walked up the stairs out in center field, the 37-foot wall

across the field of green blades in all their glory opening themselves to me through the tunnel. That Green Monster. Game 4 of the American League Championship Series. Romanticized by America's pastime. He was watching with me like we did at our last game.

Wherever the ball went that game, eyes followed. Everyone was watching the same thing. Boagarts pulled a home run 413 feet left center over the Monster filled with dents and craters from baseballs failing to escape.

I didn't know anyone there that night. Perfect strangers surrounded me. There's something romantic about that. The energy was unlike anything I had ever experienced. It echoed all around me. Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" played.

"Hands touching hands. Reaching out. Touching me, touching you."

Good times never seemed so good, even in the wake of tragedy. The Astros scored seven runs in the top of the ninth, winning the game. Flocks began to exit, but not me. I sat there, digesting the beauty of broken hearts and empty beers. Peanut shells scattered across the seats, condiments smeared on the concrete and expletives echoing over each other in collective dismay.

The Sox were important to me and after such devastation, my friends knew that. After my father passed, friends pulled their resources together and bought my ticket and flight to plant some joy in my heart. Sure, the Sox lost, but that experience lives forever, just like my father.

On April 15, the following year, I'd find myself back at Fenway for opening day, but this time I was staying the whole summer. I was on Fenway Park's Grounds Crew. I've heard once that you know it's time to leave somewhere when you stop looking up. Meaning you stop appreciating the beauty around you. The experience around you. The opportunity around you. I did my best to take it all in, even on the roughest, wettest, dirtiest, coldest and hottest days.

Most of my friends said, "You're living the dream!" Only they were wrong. It wasn't the dream, but it was dreamy. Those nine World Series banners hanging on Jersey Street on my way to Gate D every morning. The press box inside with pennants from prosperous seasons and "FENWAY PARK" scripted across the shade of hooker green.

Pesky pole, Fisk pole, the inside of the Monster. It was charming and I was a Major League Baseball professional.

My first day working at Fenway was the typical "thrown to the wolves" kind of day. It was 7 a.m. and the sun was rising into the stadium. The air was sharp and had a dampness that would seep through your clothes in minutes. When I arrived, the crew was in the final prepping stages for opening day. I tried to slyly follow the lead of the others around me as we attempted to fold a tarp that covered half the diamond. I had no idea what I was doing.

Yelling is the main form of communication at Fenway because we're usually some distance apart. I'll never forget my boss yelling, "Left field line covers!" in his thick

Boston accent where, of course, the "r" was dropped and sounded more like "covahs."

I lined up with the crew to push the tarps off the skin and as we went, I felt sharp pain enter into my cold fingers and palms. The wet surface would cling to the underside of the tarp and as we pushed, it would settle between our hands and the tarp. I wore gloves every day for the next two months after that.

My favorite thing to do there was water the Kentucky bluegrass. There were hard days and easier days and they were both challenging in their own way. I'd wake up at 5:40 a.m., eat breakfast and then run to catch the T. Getting to Kenmore, walking across the David Ortiz Bridge and looking upon Fenway was one of those moments I tried to cherish each time.

Mornings were roughly the same as all others. We'd clean the field from the previous game and prepare it for the next game later that night. I was often responsible for manicuring the skin, the dirt surface the players ran on. I'd scoop up grass clippings and clay chunks and smooth everything in preparation. I'd never been

a part of something so big that required such attention to detail. Admittedly, the more challenging days seemed to be created by the people around me or maybe my lack of tolerance for them. There were always so many "cooks in the kitchen" who'd never hesitate to suggest their ideas. It was frustrating. Indeed, there were times when I was difficult to work with or had a negative outlook. I tried, truthfully, to be positive, but some days got the best of me.

I remember seeing the World Series trophies for the first time. They'd been brought out for a corporate event and placed on a table in front of the Green Monster—quite the sight to see, reflecting the sun in all their glory. Eventually, I'd make it inside the Monster and sign the walls alongside countless others. I'd also sneak a touch on the 2018 World Series trophy when they were on display on my final day.

My finest memory of Fenway, though, has got to be pulling the tarp. It was the supreme example of teamwork and grit. Just kidding, I dreaded it like most everyone.

It took perfect execution—running around, yelling. On game days or

during the games when we had to pull it, the grounds crew was booed by everyone in the stands. When time came to resume the game, though, it was magical. Everyone cheered for us like we were the Boston Red Sox. It was something special. Pulling tarp is the most strenuous physical exertion I've ever experienced. My legs would shake uncontrollably and take on a gelatin-like form afterward. I struggled to maintain my breath, sprinting corner to corner to spread the tarp evenly across the diamond to beat the raindrops filling Fenway Park. I lucked out that summer in terms of rain games. I only pulled the tarp once during a game and wasn't there the other two times it happened. I was ill the first time and the other time, by some luck, I was in the stands cheering the crew on with my sister who was visiting. We were under the grandstand, dry as a can of peanuts.

Friends and family came to visit me while I was there. Fenway Park was my office and I never got tired of showing it off. I even surprised my uncle by letting him paint the mound rubber right on the bump before the game. I'd never seen him so excited and I'm



Doerr waiting to clean down back. Photo credit: Jay Ballard



not surprised. Not everyone gets to stand on the mound at Fenway Park. Something else few get to do is have front-row views down the first baseline for a Red Sox vs. Yankees game.

It was a four-game series for the Sox as they hosted the Yankees Thursday through Sunday. I'd worked at 7 a.m. Thursday to Friday but left right after the first pitch. The days were tiring, and I wanted to go home, but I knew I had to experience another chapter of Sox vs. Yankees. I went to work Saturday with a simple plan. I'd work from 7 a.m. to first pitch and when I got cut to go home, I'd stick around the park for a while and find a seat to watch the entertainment of the rivalry unfold.

A few hours into the shift, someone asked for volunteers to stay for the game. I knew I was off Sunday, which helped in my case because if I stayed, I'd be looking at a 15-hour shift. Great seats, paid to be there and getting to do an in-game job? I had to volunteer. It'd be my first Red Sox vs. Yankees game ever.

The biggest thing was running out in the middle of the sixth inning to smooth out the clay chunks around second base. It's a tight window between innings, and things move quickly.

We all sprint out there and start our jobs. At second base, I was met by a giant behemoth of a human—Yankee outfielder Aaron Judge. I was less than a yard from him when he stepped his foot on the second base bag and continued towards the dugout. He'd finish the season beating out Roger Maris' single season homerun record with 62.

People would give anything to run out there in the middle of a Red Sox and Yankees game, let alone run alongside Aaron Judge, the 2022 AL MVP. It was a stalemate through the 9th inning and eventually, the Red Sox would walk off, winning in extra innings.

As a member of the grounds crew, the expectation is to maintain a certain level of "professionalism" through games. A true fan can't do it walking off your rival.

There was a Yankee fan behind me yelling the entire game and hitting his hand on a crate to add noise to the atmosphere. He'd been doing it all game until the ninth inning when the Sox tied the game.

We jumped up, cheering when we won. I turned and looked at him through the eyes and drummed my hands on the crate, mimicking what he'd been doing all night. I ran onto the field, jumping on the warning track celebrating the victory.

During a game, pitchers stand on a white rubber block embedded into the clay surrounding it. It's heavy, dense and hollow. It sports a metal cylinder carved through the rubber to support itself to keep from moving. The mound rubber is placed with precise measurements to meet regulations and provide pitchers with the flattest, most proper push-off.

About a month into my time there, someone replaced it with a new one. I was getting to know everyone on the team, including this person. His sense of humor was unique and though he sported a tough guy mantra, he cared about people, including me.

We had discussed life a few times, my beliefs and the death of my father. He respected me mostly, except for when I wore my hat backward. He was the one who switched the mound rubbers. From what I could tell, he'd done it many times before and was considered a "mound expert." The mound was his haven. He curated, groomed, and would probably defend it to the death if he had the chance, a literal hill to die on.

After our little summer friendship grew, I sold him into the idea of giving me the mound rubber. We

were sitting in the alley during a game.

"I'm about 67% certain I'll give it to you," he said. I'd counter with some wise, smooth, and partially planned out words.

"Yeah, I'm up to about 84% now," he replied. "How the hell will you get it back to Idaho?"

How was I going to get it back to Idaho?

"Oh, my friend is coming out at the end of the summer. We're driving back, so I'll have plenty of space for it."

A white lie, but by the end of that night, I was walking out of the locker room and down Jersey Street with a game-used mound rubber from the Boston Red Sox' 2022 Opening Day. Through peculiar looks on the bus, I made it home with one of the most amazing things I own, with a story to tell my children and a souvenir to pass down, forever securing a lineage of Red Sox fans.

Baseball has always been a part of my life. I'm not a professional athlete and I don't throw a wicked fastball or slider, but I love the game and everything it offers.

Fenway Park opened in 1912. Over 100 years later, I experienced a little piece of its history firsthand and will forever be thankful for it.

I learned how to be more positive, that things are hardly as bad as they seem and that there's no such thing as a long day.

It's all about the perspective one has. From watering the grass, journaling on the Green Monster, pulling tarp, or grooming the skin, Fenway Park will always be a part of me.

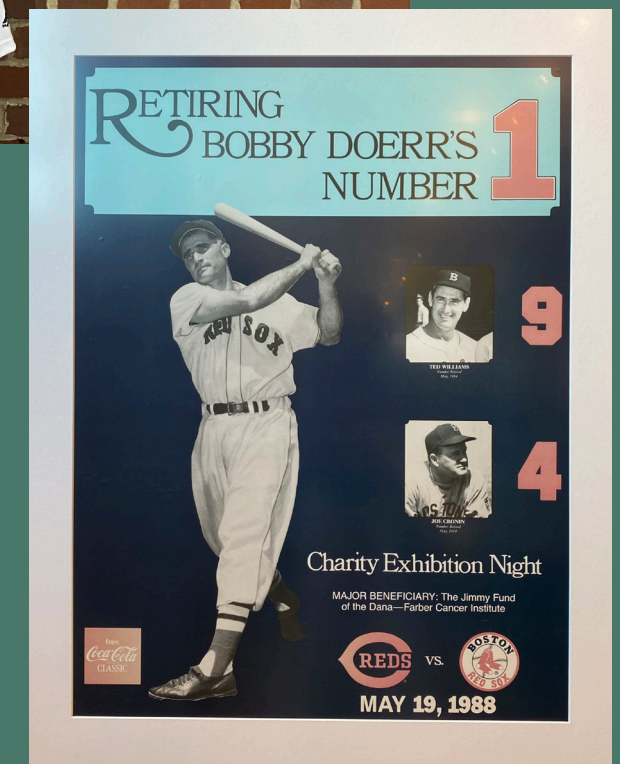


Photo credit: Chandler Doerr

