

## Blast From The Past: Eric Turner (and a love letter to Cleveland Municipal Stadium)

Written by {ga=googleeph2}

Wednesday, December 07 2011 5:00 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, December 07 2011 8:48 AM

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*The approaching Stadium lights shimmered near the horizon. They lent a dynamic of excitement matching that which my father and I shared. The Browns weren't having a good season. And today, they were facing the Cincinnati Bengals, a bad team which had already beaten the Browns weeks earlier. But this was Game Day. The lights of the Stadium were our beacon, signaling against the dark sky near the choppy waters of Lake Erie.*

Pretty dramatic. If you're a Browns fan, you understand.

*Before we reached the Stadium, we pulled off the Shoreway and parked in the long, narrow Municipal lot. Since we had arrived early, there was no need to hurry. Small groups of bundled-up fans dotted the lot, some tossing around footballs. To the left, lining the southern edge of the lot, a line of train cars stood idle on its tracks. As we proceeded toward the Stadium, we passed by a bridge abutment. On the concrete was one piece of graffiti: the words "Steelers Suck" in small, permanent, black letters.*

*My awesome wife had gifted me tickets to three games that season. This was Dad's turn to*

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*share in my pilgrimage.*

*We bore right, under another bridge and up a short slope. We now stood at the foot of the huge, dingy, yellow monolith. Gate D; beneath the thirty-foot tall Chief Wahoo sign attached at the roof. Scores of fans were shifting in various directions. Some simply mingled about; others pushed on to other gates, or had just arrived from the cindered stadium lot to the right.*

*Our pace was slowed by the crowd. We nudged through one of the blue jeans-polished, rotating turnstiles and found ourselves inside. I reveled in the familiar dank air as we walked amidst the damp concrete. Fresh cigars and stale beer. I was reminded that even the outer concourse on the ground floor of the Stadium was huge. We walked up the nearest incline to the upper levels, glancing at the peeling paint and the random small broken stadium-wall window pane (which was unreachable from the ramp, let alone repairable). Faraway sounds reverberated among the nearby noises. "Beer here!"*

*Arriving at the upper deck, we duly paid respects to the nearest galvanized steel urinal troughs (and noted some sinks and a trash can which certainly would later share their fate). We purchased our first cellophane-covered paper cups of beer and sank into our seats. The Browns were on the field, stretching and casually warming up. Doc Severinsen's trumpet echoed live over the P.A. Far below, the field was animated, a stage under the spotlights. Dad pointed down to the closest end zone, where last year's top draft pick jogged past this year's.*

*"Eric Turner and Tommy Vardell. They may not figure much into this game, but for the Browns to be any good, they'll both need to become star players."*

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