

## Springing For Baseball Insanity

Written by {ga=riverburns}

Thursday, March 15 2012 2:00 PM - Last Updated Thursday, March 15 2012 2:38 PM

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So, people think we're silly, that we get too excited over this stuff. I can say, with a relative level of certainty, that those people are right; attending Cactus League games with the level of anticipation and enthusiasm that we do is just borderline insane.

I don't know if it's because it fills a void between the Super Bowl and Opening Day, or it's just the joy of being outdoors before the Arizona Hibernation Season (summer) begins, but I get myself out to these practice games whenever possible. I don't even mind springing for the tickets, and believe me, it tends to add up.

This past Saturday provided an added bonus with the beginning of games under the lights here in Cactus League play, and with the night game being at the new [state-of-the-art Salt River Fields in Scottsdale](#), I was able to check the final Arizona Spring Training ballpark off of my checklist.

I've seen them all now, and as I suspected it would be, the Rockies and Diamondbacks shared winter home is head and shoulders above the rest the state has to offer baseball fans in the desert.

If you'll allow me to keep the horse in front of the cart here, I need to backup to explain how this weekend came to be anticipated as "Baseball Insanity". You see, we like to load up on these weekend games, to see different teams in different venues, and we are limited to Saturdays and Sundays for the most part. I don't see catching a ball game on consecutive days as anything out of the ordinary, watching meaningless baseball somehow edges out really significant college basketball for me.

There's something to be said for being outside, whether the sun is shining or not.

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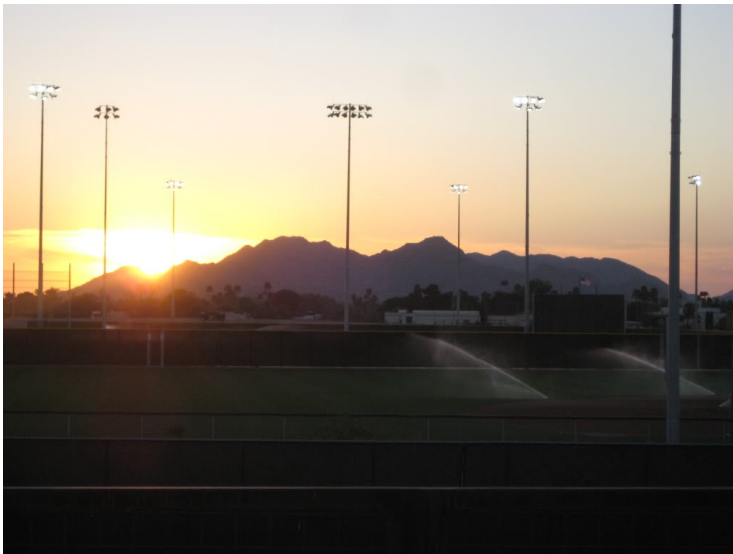
As much as the whole institution of Spring Training is a big deal to us, we don't do much in the way of planning. I despise buying tickets online; especially considering how much I appreciate paying \$3-\$5 in "convenience" fees for tickets with a face value under ten bucks.

It's not a small percentage that you can ignore, so I end up at the box office paying face value.

Call it cheap; call it savvy, I just call it more money for beer and unhealthy deliciousness at the old ball game.

However, I don't always find myself in the right parts of town to buy on location in advance, so I do sometimes find myself dealing with cyber mark-ups, as was the case with this weekend's attempt to see three games in 24 hours.

We called it "Baseball Insanity".



The original plan was Old Town Scottsdale for the Giants and Brewers on Saturday afternoon, then a few miles north to the Diamondbacks complex across the freeway from Talking Stick Hotel and Casino to see them host the Mariners under the lights. I already had tickets in hand to see the Indians and Angels in Tempe on Sunday.

However, budget restrictions and common sense caused the best laid plans of mice and men to go awry, which begs the question, how much would you pay to see a Brewers split squad play an exhibition game with the San Francisco Giants on a sitting-room-only lawn?

If you said anything less than \$32, you would have been like me, looking for something else to do on Saturday. Granted, this is Scottsdale, a self-proclaimed exclusive area of town, where

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you can expect your footwear to be inspected before entering some establishments, only for the privilege of paying \$9-\$15 for a drink. So, after a decade of living here, sticker shock shouldn't be an issue in this high brow community, but not everyone is willing to seek an alternative, but I am, and I did. For a quarter of the price, I found the other half of the Brewers split squad to be hosting the Cubs at the Maryvale Baseball Park, a haven a baseball fields in the heart of one of Phoenix's "less desirable" areas.

Truth be told, getting there is half the battle with this place. It sits about 3 miles north of I-10 and 3 miles west of I-17 near the intersection of 51st

Avenue and West Indian School Road, an area that is always congested even 10,000 baseball fans swarming the area.

For Yours Truly, the ten mile commute from my abode to my parking spot on game day ran about seventy minutes, or forty longer than it should have, for those of you obsessed with common sense.

However, once you get inside the ballpark, the terrors of the difficult commute are all in the past.

There's nothing sexy about it, but this is a great place to watch a game, provided you don't need high def video scoreboard and a sushi bar to enjoy sports.



Their lawn seating, which is a Spring Training staple for me, is just excellent. It wraps from foul territory just beyond the infield dirt at first base, around the outfield to the same spot on the third base side, and offers spots with sun and shade.

There are good vantage points and piss poor vantage points, and I find the latter to be a wonderful area for disinterested mothers with small hyper children.

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Everything about the park is accessible; the concession stands, the restrooms, the walkways.

Even the box office on Thursday, a game day, was easy to get in and out of, thanks to the friendly staff.

I wouldn't expect

[anything less](#)

that represents Wisconsin, the home state of the team this ballpark hosts.

On the field, it was Cubs and Brewers, which is a rivalry of the superiority/inferiority complex sort. Despite multiple playoff appearances and a state of the art facility in Milwaukee, the Brewers fans definitely suffer the little brother syndrome on some level, even if big brother is commonly known as a "Lovable Loser". The polarizing Ryan Dempster, a modern day Buddy Hackett to Cubs fans that's seen as a guy who tries to hard by everyone else, seemed to fuel the fire by [throwing at long-time Cubbie \(now Brewer\) Aramis Ramirez's head](#).

It got some ooh's, ah's, and hey's from the very split crowd of Cub and Brewer fans, but the WGN broadcast on the DVR revealed what I would consider an honest case of the ball slipping out of Dempster's hand, but a hell of a coincidence all the same.

To be fair to those Cheese Heads, and I trust they're mostly

[Packer \(and Badger\) fans at heart](#)

, I wouldn't think to kindly of my ballpark being called "Wrigley North".

It's funny, because I know people in the Brewers organization that refer to the digs at Clark and Addison as "Miller Park South", it just doesn't have a good ring to it.

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[some cheap tickets](#) [Birds Stadium](#) was probably