

DUCKING THE APPLE

Fock 3: Yankees Suck! Yankees Suck!

The Saturday afternoon rendez-vous plan at Yank-Me Stadium was a simple one: I would meet Patrick, Doug and Jim at Gate 1. Since none of us had ever been to this particular stadium before, and were thus ignorant of the geography of it, that seemed like a rudimentary and fool-proof scheme.



The first part of the Yankee experience was the parking. I had been dreading this. But the lot was easy to get to, only about a four minute walk from the Stadium, and cost a mere \$7! I had a \$20 out, and I had been hoping it would be enough. So right away, I'm figuring that's an extra \$13 for refreshments!

After tidying up the van a bit, I took the stroll up to the Stadium to meet my cronies for a fun afternoon of baseball, camaraderie, and all the attendant activities and vices.

It only took a short time to figure out a fatal flaw in our simple plan: There is no Gate 1 at Yankee Stadium! Hmmm. Well, Patrick had his cell phone, and I had mine, so we survived that little glitch. Still, how can you have no Gate 1?? I

walked all the way around the park, and saw Gates 2, 4, and 6. Stupid damn New Yorkers. City, that is. We have Gate 1's in Rachacha.

The Sox lost an 8-3 battle in the Saturday game, 8-3, thanks largely to the ineffectiveness of John "White Flag" Wasdin. The Bosox had been up 3-0, after successfully pulling off a suicide squeeze -- possibly the first in team history -- but then all the bad stuff (i.e., Yankee runs) started happening. We didn't really care a whole lot, though it was irritating to have all of our early inning taunts thrown back in our faces as the home team took the lead. There really isn't a whole lot we can reply to the "Nine-teen EIGHT-teen!!!" chant. [For you non-baseball folk, 1918 was the last year the Red Sox had won the World Series. The Yankees had last won it, uh, eight months ago.]

There were plenty of Sox fans around us -- a lot more than I had expected -- but some of the anti-Boston sentiment was pretty obvious. From T-shirts that read "Boston Sucks" to fingernails which proclaimed anti-team ideology [below, left], New York was making their distaste for all things Bostonian



quite evident. But that didn't stop Patrick and Jim from proudly wearing their Bosox caps though!

All that just made the bonds with other Sox fans that much tighter. We circled the wagons and weathered the Yankee vitriol, knowing that it was Sunday's Pedro vs. Roger matchup that really mattered.

I have no idea where we went or what we did on Saturday night.

On Sunday, after a long period of what we called "sitting around" in [Patrick's sister] Lynn's mid-Manhattan apartment, we finally decided to do something New Yorkish, and rallied enough gumption to walk the ten or so blocks to the Empire State Building.

It was tall.

It was also crowded. Yeah, like stupid us, thinking that on Memorial Day weekend, we'd be able to just stroll onto the elevator. Duh. Must have been 700 people in line, and that was about 626 too many.



Sooooo, anyone want to guess what we did? Anyone? Anyone?
Hmmm???

We went to a bar!

In fact, we went to a few bars. The Playwright seemed like it was going to be snooty, but we unsnooted it pretty quickly. McCormack's was a good Irish Pub, and I think we stayed at the more comfortably unseemly Emerald Inn for more than a couple.

We also took in Central

Park for a little walk and some vegetation study, and paused at the memorial to John Lennon in the park sidewalk near the Dakota Hotel, where we was killed. Very sad.



All in all, we cut it damn close, getting to Yankee Stadium barely in time for the opening pitch. Matt the Banman, a life-long Sox fan who had been to this enemy edifice before had told me that I should take the walk up to the top of the upper deck to see what the park looked like from up there. Well, unnecessary tip, Matt, because that's where our seats were! Four rows from the back wall of the upper deck behind home plate. Those players looked damn small!



There was an odd delay in the fifth inning, and several minutes passed while Roger and his catcher were the only two players on the field (photo, right). The home plate umpire had pulled himself from the game, and the umps were regrouping. The previous inning had taken its toll on the home ump. A Pedro Martinez fastball that must have had a little extra juice on it, eluded the batter's swing, and must have also eluded the catcher's glove, gone under his arm, and caught the umpire right in the carrot and peas. Apparently the ump's phone was still ringing off the hook between innings,



and he called “no mas” to the rest of the night’s proceedings.

Well, the story had a happy ending as the pitcher’s duel lived up to its billing, going 0-0 into the ninth before Trot Nixon’ two-run dinger brought the curtain down. Pedro nearly raised it again by *hitting two batters* in the bottom on the ninth to load the bases, but Goodness and Right prevailed and the evil, smelly Yankees were thwarted.

Of course, throughout the weekend, as always, I had to leave notice that I had been there, like a dog marking his territory. I had printed up some stickers, 100 of them, and I was sticking them just about every place I could get away with. These were not the usual URCC or HFC Striders stickers that discreetly decorate many rest rooms, poles, vending machines, and room air fresheners all along the NY Thruway and Mass. Pike, as well as several Boston and Rochester area bars. No, I branched out this time. They’re not an advertisement for anything really, just kind of a weird type of RAM-was-here thing. They looked like this →

And there are quite a few of them stuck in various places in Yank-Me Stadium.

I was proud of what obnoxiously bad winners we Red Sox fans were, gleefully descending on the combination bar and bowling alley across the street, and readily raising our voices in hearty “Yankees Suck” cheers and the like.

To be fair, though, we initially chanted “Ped-ro, Ped-ro”, which was simply cheering our hero for the night. I forget if our escalation was brought on by a Yankee retort or not, but what the heck, how often can you stand proudly in a bar right next to Yankee Stadium, and bellow into the night the true thrumming of your beantown-bred heartstrings: “Yankees Suck! Yankees Suck! Yankees Suck!”

Ahh, pure poetry...

Naturally, we weren’t done. We ended up at the Rodeo Bar, right around the corner from Lynn’s place. I don’t recall whether we went anyplace else first, but I know we finished up there. To our amazement, the tall skinny short-haired barkeep named Beth who had served us in the afternoon – and who had served Jim a “brunch beer” a bit before noon – was still there at 2 a.m. Not sure if she liked us or merely tolerated us, but she was cool.

I slept in the van on the final night. I had tried sleeping on half a bed in the apartment the night before, but between the snoring and blanket-grabbing and getting pushed to the edge of the bed, it had been a very harrowing experience. Funny that a downtown-NYC street corner was a more peaceful night’s sleep.

The downside, of course, was not having a shower in the morning. Took care of that on the ride home though, within the peaceful boundaries of the Delaware Water Gap, a lovely National Recreation Area where Pennsylvania nuzzles against New Jersey” northwest border.

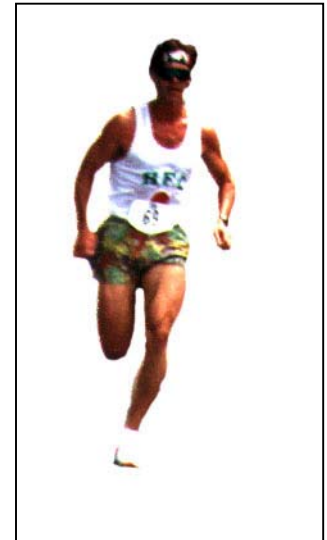
Anyway, there was this nice little stream, feeding into the Delaware River, tucked among bushes and trees and rocks. It was cold, cold, **cold** water to plunk down into, but once past the crucial spot and into a full-body dunk, it was downright exhilarating.

The dunk cleansed the body and soul of the Big Apple’s residue. Cleansing the liver would take a bit longer.

It was good, though, since it put me back in touch with the Roadtrip way of Life: sleeping, relieving, bathing, eating, drinking wherever opportunity offered. It was a good warmup for Roadrage2000, even though the setting was mostly inner-city.

That huge concrete stage of New York City, where so many millions play out their daily dramas, would be circumvented this time around. It was much more important to leave the northeast behind, and going north of the Big Apple via I-84 was the most expeditious route.

I-84 goes dead westerly across the lower tier of NY, then turns due south and heads right for the top left corner of New Jersey. At the last moment though, it comes to its senses and cuts hard right, seemingly just yards from the Garden State, and loops northwest to the small village of Matamoras, PA. BM and I have now niftily sidestepped not just NYC, but NJ as well.



However, we have gone almost 500 miles on this trip to Sacramento, and we are about 150 miles further away from that city than when we started.

Whatever.

By and large, New Jersey is a nice state, though. It really is. The metro area, with all its refineries, and Newark, give it a bad rap. Newark, in this man's opinion, is truly the asshole of America. But, what the heck, even Marilyn Monroe had an asshole, and she was pretty nice, by and large.

WTF do we come up with phrases like that: by and large?? It's kind of like "for the most part," which I take to mean "overall" or "in general," even though I'm a tad miffed by the clumsy combo of "most part." This "by and large" phrase, though, is just weird. Know where it comes from? Do ya? I'll tell ya: *By and large* is nautical in origin, originally referring to the sailing qualities of a vessel. To sail *by the wind* is to sail directly into the wind (or as close into the wind as is possible). A *large wind* is one that comes from the stern quarter (on a square-rigged vessel, if the wind is directly astern only the rear sails catch it, therefore the most favorable wind comes from slightly off one side where it will fill all the sails). Therefore, a ship that sails well *by and large* sails well in all directions. The phrase dates to the mid-17th century. [<http://www.wordorigins.org/wordorb.htm>] Yeah, that clears it up. Riiiiight.

There is no state denser than New Jersey. Slightly smaller than Massachusetts, but with more people than Bulgaria, it is the only state with a density of over 1000 folks per square mile, nearly *triple* the density of New Flippin' York. The metropolitan areas of NYC in the north (including Newark, Patterson, Hackensack, Elizabeth, Hoboken, and Rahway – jewels all) and those of Philadelphia in the south (like Camden, another gem) contribute hugely to that.

Anyway, we never did go into New Jersey on RR2K, so I don't really have anything else to say about it. At least not now. After all, once you've associated something with Marilyn Monroe's anus, it's probably best to just move on.

Yes, on ... to Sacramento!