

We had the chance to tour the St. Louis Sports Hall of Fame with momento's of Cardinal greats past and present as well as the restored Union Station and LaCledes Landing. Everyone discovered that St. Louis is really a great baseball town. All you heard, all you saw, was baseball - more specifically Cardinal baseball.

CANDLESTICK PARK EXPRESS:

September 1988...

The scenery on the trip up the California coastline from Los Angeles to San Francisco on The Coast Starlight was spectacular. This was easily the largest group of any of the tours, 20 attended, but only 11 were actual PTP players. The Madrid family deserves special recognition, four generations of their family made the trek and they even met more of their gang when they arrived in San Francisco. We had a great time at Candlestick Park and then headed for downtown San Francisco where we rode the Cable cars and visited China Town, Fisherman's Wharf and Ghiradelli Square. Perry Andrus was a big hit with Marty and Bonnie Green's son Adam, who I suspect is being groomed by his father as a future PTP player.

After all of the bad things I have heard about Candlestick Park, I was pleasantly surprised to find it to be a very nice park nestled on Candlestick point next to the bay and surrounded by mountains. I might even like it more than Dodger Stadium, which I feel is overrated. The highlight of seeing Dodger Stadium was the peanut men who hurl bags of peanuts your way with more control than many Major League pitchers and the squiggly roofed bleachers. What disgusts me the most about the park has nothing to do with the park at all - it's the ultra laid back attitude of the fans. Fans arriving in the third inning and leaving in the seventh - I could never get used to that. Maybe it's just that everyone is more concerned with beating the traffic than what's going on with the game. The best National League park in Southern California? Jack Murphy Stadium in San Diego. A beautiful park in a nice area, very good sight lines, not overcrowded, a bleacher section with real seats instead of benches, a very good score board, good parking, excellent weather and for some reason really liked the brown decor. This park has really turned around from being very difficult to hit home runs, to an excellent home run park.

SKYDOME EXPRESS:

August 1989...

We all discovered what a unique experience SkyDome baseball is. Take for instance watching a game from right field as you eat and drink at the Hard Rock cafe. We also scaled the CN tower. The timing was perfect for the SkyDome Express. It ended with a caught stealing as I was able to nip Larry Nordstrom's team to win the tournament just as we pulled into Union Station.

KC EXPRESS:

August 1990...

What does a "George Brett folder" and The Texas Eagle Amtrak train have in common? They both made the KC Express the most thrilling and heart-stopping tour of them all. The tour got off to a scintillating start as I was driving the Milwaukee group to meet the Chicago group at the Union Station train depot. We got stuck in horrendous Chicago traffic and it became a race to try to catch our train. Rich, who is an 11 year old boy and myself ran ahead of David Clausen and Rich's Dad Dick to try to find the rest of our group and hold the train. We ran through downtown Chicago with our luggage and finally made it to the station at 4:10 - our train

leaves at 4:15! I told the Chicago people to go to the gate and Rich and I would go back and get Dick and David to tell them where we were. Rich and I waited for them to come down the escalator, but they were no where in sight. Minutes went by like seconds. I looked at my watch and it was 4:15. If I wasn't panicked before, I was now! Rich and I ran to our gate through a maze of people and Dick and David amazingly were there with the rest of the group. I was told that it's too late to board. We looked through the gate and the train was still there and I yelled at the conductor to see if we could still board. He waved us to come down and we tore down the ramp. We started to board the rear car and the train started moving down the tracks just as Larry Nordstrom the last person boarded. Whew! I couldn't believe we made it.

We stopped off in St. Louis our first night and re-visited St. Louis Union Station. The next morning we continued our draft style tournament as we headed for KC. Mike Mack, his cousin Tom, Rich and I had a heated game of two on two basketball on the upperlevel patio of the Westin Crown Center. We were all excited and ready to take the bus from the hotel to Royals Stadium. I just had to grab the tickets out of my George Brett folder and ... Wait a minute where's the George Brett folder? It's got to be here because I know I had it with me when we checked into the hotel. We all searched high and low, called the front desk, called the maids. No folder. As we headed down the elevator I had given up on ever seeing the folder and was resigned to having to find us new tickets to the game and deal later with our missing Amtrak tickets that were also in the folder. Walla! The elevator door opens and Larry with a big grin on his face holds the George Brett folder triumphantly. He had found it behind the Bellman's desk. We enjoyed the game vs. the Brewers at Royals stadium and Larry deservedly won the tournament. Larry wins the George Brett MVP award for his performance! Oh, Mike sorry about that Pedro Guerrero homerun to knock you out of the tournament.

TIGER STADIUM EXPRESS:

September 1990...

Steve Mitrakos deserves special mention for both his far-flung participation from New York to attend both the KC Express and the Tiger Stadium Express and also his sportscaster impersonalties. We hoped to see Cecil Fielder hit his 50th home run, but even with our urging he fell short. Tiger Stadium is one of those intimate parks that once you walk in you feel like you're almost on the field. Ball parks almost always seem smaller when you are actually there then what you envision on TV. Kudos to Jim Vagourdes who in making his rookie tour appearance showed us how it should be done by winning the tournament.

POST GAME SHOW:

By now, I'm starting to feel like I'm qualified to write a 500 page behavioral study of PTP players. Their ways of rolling the dice, who should roll the dice, who shouldn't roll the dice, who should read the charts and at what times, rule interpretations and pace of the game. Their emotions and dispositions ran from cordial to tense, hyperactive to calm, despairing to hopeful, triumphant to dejected. The people were an absolute delight to play - it was like I had known them all my life. Much of the time it felt like we were at the ball park and we were having an in depth discussion of baseball or whatever and the game and conversation just seemed to flow naturally. We'd comment on the game and bring out antidotes about our own PTP experiences. I had the chance to clear up rule questions, ratings questions, player card calculation questions and whatever else anyone wanted to know about the game. I also took some notes on some good ideas and suggestions that were mentioned.