

SPORTS HUB

“Go Big Green!” meant Dartmouth football when I was a kid. How much I so looked forward to my father taking us to the Harvard game when it was played in nearby Cambridge (Allston). Dartmouth was his *alma mater*, and Dartmouth winning mattered.



Even in losing – or because of it, Boston’s professional teams have long held the national, media spotlight. I guess our college teams bring more pedigree than performance to the playing field. (But Harvard-Yale is still “The Game” in college football since 1875.)

When guests come to Boston, my thoughts instantly run to history. “Let’s climb the Bunker Hill Monument and visit Concord and Lexington.”

But since Boston has become the hub of big-time sports, I wasn’t too surprised this past summer when visitors arrived more interested in our football Patriots than our Revolutionary War ones. So, how about a sports facility tour?



Our guests up from the south brought an alum’s loyalty to Duke and a keen interest in another Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) member - Boston College. Even insulated Ivy Leaguers were woken up to the Eagles’ presence in 1984 by Doug Flutie’s famous, last-second *Hail Mary* pass to beat the Miami Hurricanes.



The doors to BC’s athletic facilities in Chestnut Hill were open and unguarded when we stopped by on a weekday August morning. (Youth training on the hockey rink and preseason Women’s Soccer Team picture taking were in progress.) There was even available parking right in front. On a football Saturday, you can’t park within miles.



Standing in the empty bleachers of Alumni Stadium, it's easy to imagine those metal benches full of cheering fans. Yet its rigid box design did somehow seem small to meet a stated seating capacity of 44,500. (Harvard Stadium – which reminds me of the Roman Colosseum – has only a 25,000-seat capacity.)

By the time we reached Foxborough, Patriots training camp was over for the day. The Krafts have truly made their Patriot Place a destination with its upscale mall complex of restaurants and shops. You'll find endless free parking on a non-game day and the perfect spot for lunch on a Boston sports' tour. There's also, of course, the Patriots ProShop and the Hall (of fame).



Not even a ghost is left of the old Sullivan Stadium. Gillette deserves to be included among the modern wonders of the world or at least of New England. If nothing else, the stadium is a testament to the amount of money there is in professional football.



You can look in for free. Belly up to the chain-link fence guarding the field opening for a worthwhile perspective of a great American sports venue. Gillette Stadium was ready in 2002, just in time for a part in the popular image of the dynasty that was Tom Brady and Bill Belichick.

But for a fin (\$5), ride the elevator up the 22-story lighthouse tower completed in 2023. The 360-degree glass walled observation deck, known as the Lookout, has a terrific view of all 64,628 seats and of the rural/suburban surroundings stretching as far as downtown Boston.



It's hard to pity owner Bob Kraft who's inevitably shown during home games seated with some luminary in his luxury box overlooking the multi-billion-dollar fruition of his long-ago sports dream. But I wonder if he misses those days as an ordinary season ticket holder rooting shoulder to shoulder with Patriots' fans.

It was late and I was tired. The lights in Fenway Park, when I was a kid in the early Sixties, didn't shine as brightly as they do today. We had box seats, midway up, overlooking the Red Sox pitcher who must have been one of those ironmen of ole that routinely went the distance. By extra innings the stands, probably never quite full, were rapidly emptying. But my father wanted to go the distance too, and struggling to stay awake, I hung on to one of our rare father-son moments. Who won? It doesn't matter.



Sitting again in the stands, it was the Fenway of old. And that still matters because it's the reason that of all our local sports' sites, this was *the one must see* for our southern guests. Deserving no less recognition on the National Register of Historic Places than the Paul Revere House, I suspect Fenway Park has the greater appeal to many Boston visitors. There's forever the Green Monster (Dartmouth green?) and that old fashioned scoreboard. And have the seats even changed in the last 60 years? You wouldn't know it.

What better place to be in Boston on a perfect summer's evening? (Sitting just inside Pesky's Pole, halfway up, we could see along the line of every pitch – great seats!)

I'm always eager to lead another walk-through history with visitors to Boston. Or - take me out to the ball game and buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jacks!

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