

Our Glorious Super Bowl Trip

Written by Webster29 and Earth_Wind_And_Fire
Monday, 13 February 2012 01:01 -

After many years of being a Giants fan, I finally was able to see my beloved Giants at a Super Bowl, in person, with my son by my side the whole time. And let me tell you, it was one of the greatest experiences of my life, and one of my proudest moments as a Giants faithful.

It all started the Tuesday before Super Bowl XLVI. We did not have tickets to the Super Bowl and were planning a small party to watch the game instead. But out of curiosity, Adam and I watched ticket prices online just to see what tickets were going for since the NFC Championship game. Most of the prices were well out of the range I was willing to spend. We figured that we would just watch the game at home and be just as content as we had been for the other Giant Super Bowls. That Tuesday however, Adam was carefully watching an auction on eBay for two tickets that were reasonably priced compared to most other listings. I gave Adam a maximum price and told him to go ahead and bid on the tickets. About 15 minutes later, we were Indy bound! By the end of the week we had our tickets in hand, had a game day parking permit, and had 3 nights of hotel reservations set. We left for Indianapolis early Friday morning.

We stayed in Dayton, Ohio Friday night. We were about 100 miles outside of Indianapolis but it kept our hotel costs down. When we arrived we were greeted by a group of young Giants fans from Poughkeepsie and Yonkers. They had spent the day in Indianapolis and told us how much fun they had. They didn't have tickets to the game but they did not want to miss the party. One of them stated that he was good friends with Jimmy Kennedy, #73 for the Giants. We planned on going to dinner that night but opted to get our rest for the next day and drive into Indianapolis early in the morning.

We drove into Indy early Saturday morning. As soon as we got off our exit, we immediately found a parking place near Lucas Oil Stadium for \$30 for the entire day. Compared to most other lots, this was quite reasonable. It was pouring rain that day but we did not let it get our spirits down. The night before Adam had found out that DirecTV was sponsoring a flag football game called the Celebrity Beach Bowl. The game was to be held in a large tent constructed in center field of Victory Field, home stadium of the Indianapolis Indians, Triple A affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates. Some of the former players and celebrities playing in the game included Matt Stafford, Cam Newton, Warren Moon, Merrill Hoge, Desmond Howard, Dieon Sanders, Erin Andrews, Terrell Owens, Hope Solo, Eddie George, Jim Brown, Joe Montana, Artie Lange, Kate Upton, and several others. It was free to anyone but was first come first serve for tickets. The line was too long for either of our liking so we decided to partake in some of Indy's other offerings.

Instead we went to the NFL Experience. That was set up in the Indiana Convention Center, which was built on the site of the former home of the Colts, the RCA Dome. Tickets were \$25 each and we had a great time. There were many games for kids and adults alike. They had a 40-yard dash with electric timing set up for kids and adults. I thought about giving it a try but I knew I'd pull something and be shot for the rest of the weekend. Other stations included the vertical jump, cone drill, obstacle courses, and many other drills players will be doing in a couple of weeks at the combine in Indy. The NFL had their shop set up in the main room as well. It was swamped throughout the day. We should have gone in first thing when it wasn't busy.

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One of our favorite attractions was a presentation by a couple of NFL officials. We got to go under the hood of an actual NFL replay booth and watch a close play that had been challenged during the year and determine if the play should stand or be overturned. If we got it right, we were given an NFL whistle. Adam and I both got it right, but a Jets fan that was behind me that I had been talking to "blew the whistle" on the both of us by announcing into the speaker to everyone that we were high school football officials. It was all in fun though and the presentation was quite interesting. Adam also met an actual MLB umpire who was standing in front of him in line.

They had the NFL draft set that is put up at Radio City Music Hall in one of the rooms of the convention center and Adam got his picture taken with a #1 Giants jersey at the podium. They had jerseys from all 32 teams so you could pick what jersey you wanted to hold. Adam said that the fan in front of him was a Cowboys fan, but his young son wanted his picture taken with a Giants jersey. A wise young fan! They also had displays for the Hunt and Halas Trophies, the Lombardi Trophy, the NFL Man of the Year Award, a display of every Super Bowl ring, and footballs from every championship game in the Super Bowl era. They had a section for the Hall of Fame to display jerseys and helmets and other misc. The ProBowl had a small area to display. They also had a huge football memorabilia auction with some really great (but expensive) items including game worn jerseys and championship rings among many other items. In the next room was a play zone for younger kids that wouldn't be able to do the football activities in the main hall.

In the main hallway there were replicas of each team's uniform that you could stand behind to make it look like you were wearing your favorite team's uniform. They also had a brief history of the game of football broken up in several kiosks by eras that lined the entire hallway. There were plaster moldings of player's legs, arms, and hands that fans could compare their body parts to. They had a few footballs that had the grips of Jim Kelly, Warren Moon, and Troy Aikman that fans could match up their hand with. There was a kiosk dedicated to the men and women that served in the armed forces. In the center of the main hall was a large NFL Network stage.

Further down they had an autograph stage where you could get autographs from NFL players. When we were there, Kevin Smith, RB for the Lions was signing for fans. To the right of the stage was a large memorabilia showcase. We could have spent a small fortune in there. To the left of the stage was the main sponsors hall, where each major sponsor had their own kiosk and attractions. Verizon had a trivia style game using smartphones, GMC and Bridgestone Tires had foam pits that you could jump into and catch a ball with a green screen behind them making it look like you were making a game winning touchdown. Antonio Gates was signing autographs at the GMC booth. Bose speakers had a kiosk where you could listen to great calls in Super Bowl history on their speakers (Super Bowls XXV and XLII included). Under Armour also had a kiosk.

We then went back to the car to drop off our "swag" and have a quick bite to eat. Then we headed over to the Super Bowl village to continue with the festivities. Upon our arrival in the Super Bowl village, you are greeted with that famous zip line that was shown on television so much. It looked fun but neither of us attempted going down it. The Super Bowl village stretched from the Indiana Convention Center all the way down to the Conseco Field House

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where the Pacers play. There were tons of bars and restaurants in the area and all were packed to the gills. The streets were filled with fans enjoying live music being played from two stages featuring several bands throughout the day. One of the major attractions were the Giants and Patriots themed Indy Cars sitting in front of NBC's broadcast booth. We walked up to Monument Circle and saw the giant XLVI roman numerals sitting in the road.

After we left the Super Bowl village, we went over to the NFL Headquarters at the JW Marriott. You may have seen this building on television. It was the big hotel with the Lombardi Trophy pictured on it's facade. We had heard that this is where Radio Row was located. When we got there we were told that Radio Row was not open to the public that day. However, while over there, Adam met and got his picture taken with Archie Manning, Mark Cuban and Artie Lange. We also saw Plaxico Burress, Rex Ryan, Trent Dilfer, Paul Tagliabue, Chris Berman, Ron Jaworski, Chris Carter, Kurt Warner, Matt Stafford, Jason Garrett and probably a couple more that I can't remember.

I have to say, I was not at all impressed with Chris Berman. To me he looked disheveled and wouldn't acknowledge the crowd at all other than a half-hearted wave as he went into the hotel. Just his mannerism sort of left me cold.

After we left the hotel we were going to find some place to eat. The downtown area has several restaurants to choose from but of course they all had waiting lines, some of them quite long. We were going over to the Hard Rock Cafe because we had one of their all access cards and thought we might get a table a little quicker. They were closed for a private party. So we just wondered around for a while. The downtown area was just packed. They had several streets blocked off to traffic so people could walk the streets and take in the sites. At one point it was so crowded the police had to restrict pedestrian traffic to moving in one direction. I have never seen that before, a one way street for pedestrians. We were told if we wanted to go in the opposite direction we had to walk a block down and go the other way.

One other thing that I found extremely annoying was the "preachers". They were on every street corner and sometimes several at the same location and they all had microphones. Now I of course have no problem with anyone's right to free speech and freedom of religion. But they really were annoying.

A word about Indianapolis. Despite these relatively minor annoyances, the city of Indianapolis did a fantastic job hosting this Super Bowl. Their staff of volunteers were so helpful. The Indianapolis Police Department were everywhere if needed but generally stayed out of everyones way. They were there to help not hinder the festivities. The fans we encountered were great. Saturday there were tons of fans of other teams that were just in town to party and enjoy the atmosphere of the Super Bowl. About the only problem we had with any other fans was when a couple of Eagles fans informed us how bad the Giants "sucked".

We finally went to a sports bar next to the Giants hotel called Champions. The line there wasn't too bad. We had about a 30 min wait. The food was good, the service was great, and everyone was having an awesome time. After diner we were pretty tired so we decided to go to our motel and get some sleep. We didn't want to be too tired come game day.

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Saturday night we stayed in Richmond, Indiana. It was about 1 hour drive east of Indy right on Interstate 40. We stayed that far out of town to save some money. A room at the Red Roof Inn just south of Indy was going for \$375 per night. I paid \$172 total for 2 nights in Richmond. The hotel was nothing fancy, but the beds were comfortable and it accomodated our needs.

SUNDAY: We left our hotel around 10 in the morning and got to Indy a little before 11. We parked in an underground garage with a prepaid parking permit we got on the internet from the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce. The cost was \$60 and it was a bargain. Many of the lots in the area were charging \$100 to \$300 or more. We ate breakfast at a restaurant called LePeep. They have great omelets. We me up with one of Adam's college friends and his friend at the restaurant. Adam's friend is in the Air Force and about to be deployed for another tour in Afghanistan and the other worked for NBC in Pittsburgh. His boss is Lynn Swan and Swan was gave them two tickets to the game, but he had to withdraw the offer as Tim Tebow had gotten the tickets. After the story got out, Swan not only came up with 2 new tickets, but they were for a suite and they got tickets to the NFL Tailgate party and a few other perks. I was quite happy for these two. I liked them a lot. Very nice young men.

After breakfast, Adam and I stopped into a great sports bar called the Indianapolis Colts Grille. We each had a beer while watching highlights from Super Bowl XLII that the bar had playing on several of the televisions. Watching those highlights never get old. It was getting close to 2 in the afternoon. That was the time they were letting fans into Lucas Oil Stadium so we started walking over. They only had one entry point and security was tight. We went through pretty easy being there so early but I was thinking what a zoo it was probably going to be when the majority of fans started pouring in.

My impression of Lucas Oil Stadium was mixed. The corridors were spacious and well laid out. It had a nice atmosphere inside. Our seats were way up in the last row of the upper deck in the Patriots endzone (the endzone where most the action in the game occured at least), but we still had a pretty good view of the game. There was a major design flaw that Adam and I both disliked in the stadium however. They have two jumbotrons kitty corner from each other. There are inside support girders that partially blocked our view of each one. I am certainly no enginee,r but I thought they could have designed that much better. Another problem was the steepness of the stairs in the upper deck. I work out a lot on a stepper and stairs don't bother me. I often take stairs opposed to a elevator, but our seats were in row 28 and I thought I was going to die by the time I got up there. I told Adam I'm not moving from my seat until the end of the game and naturally I had to go to the men's room at half time. Many other fans around us could be hear making the same complaints.

Adam had a couple of Patriot fans next to him during the game, but for the most part, we were surrounded by Giants fans. I can't say enough about what nice folks they were. We had a ball. For three and a half hours we laughed, cried, lived, and died together. The crowd was well behaved. There were about four Patriots fans a few rows in front of us that kept standing up. A Giant fan sitting behind politely asked if they would sit down and they got mouthy (real mouthy). Security had to come up and calm them down.

I won't rehash the game. I know everyone saw it. I am not a big Madonna fan but I actually

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enjoyed the half time show. At the end of the game when Brady threw the Hail Mary pass to the end zone right below us we couldn't tell what had happened for a few seconds. Then we heard the roar of the crowd and I saw one of the officials signal incomplete and we just went NUTS. Hugging, high five'ing and just taking it in. That is something, a feeling, I will carry to the grave. We stayed at our seats for some of the fans, mostly Patriots fans, to clear out and just take in the confetti shower and the bedlam on the field. Then we said our goodbyes to our upper deck friends and went down to the lower seats to watch the post game party. It was just unbelievable. I was wearing a Dr. Seuss Cat in the Hat type Giants hat. I got a lot of nice comments on that hat. We stayed until they started throwing us out (sort of). Security was polite. They just asked us to start moving along. We thought about joining the revelers down town but decided to head on back. It had been a great day, one of the best in my life. I finally got to see MY GIANTS win a Super Bowl, in person, and with my son too. I know it is expensive. It can be very expensive. If anyone of you gets a chance to go and if there is any way you can work it out, do it. It is an experience I think every football fan should feel at least once in their life.