

TAILGATER MONTHLY

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2009

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TOTAL TRIP!
A 2008 YEAR IN REVIEW

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YEAR IN REVIEW

SEASON WRAP-UP

By Adam Goldstein

2008 was quite the season! Especially for me, as I attended 40 football games in 18 weeks! Here's how it broke down:

- 37 NFL (including 1 Playoff)
- 2 College (including 1 Bowl)
- 1 High School

I immersed myself in the sport and can honestly say it was an amazing experience. The driving took its toll, especially in the last few weeks. I clocked up 35,000 miles on the road and over 60,000 miles including flights, plus a ten mile charity run for the Walter Payton Cancer Trust.

I knew it was going to be a tough trip, not just physically with all the driving, but mentally too. I spent most of the time on my own in a car for up to 18 hours at a time, then on my own in hotel rooms, writing or editing. The first half of the trip, from the first game in NYC to the London game in October, went very smoothly. That is, other than driving the wrong way up a highway and being confronted by two oncoming trucks, but apart from that, it was fine.

Flying back to the U.S for the second leg, things started to go downhill. I missed flights, I missed

interviews, I locked myself out of the car, and I broke practically everything! My laptop. My camcorder. My web site went down, and my credit cards got rejected. But I was still able to meet great fans, eat amazing food, see incredible football and even squeeze in a few extra games!

Thanks to this magazine I was able to meet some of the best tailgaters in the league, and everyone was so friendly and was really impressed by my trip. Looking back now, I was really interested in the "fan" side of the sport from the start. A television network back home had told me they were not interested in my trip because they feel the guy in Green Bay drinking a beer at the game is the same as the girl in Arizona drinking cocktails at her tailgate. This annoyed me very much, and although I did not have too much of an agenda on this trip, I wanted to prove this guy wrong!

Clearly this network guy had not seen football in more than one stadium, because every place is different. Sure you can argue that on some superficial level people go to the game and drink and eat as a pre-game ritual. However as soon as I started to speak to tailgaters, actually, as soon as I saw the car parks and surrounding environment, I could sense a real difference between each franchise - and between each tailgate party - because people are simply different, and each team has its own energy

and atmosphere.

Granted, everywhere I went I found friendly people. Sure some mocked me, and for those people I moved on, but I always found a supportive soul quickly. Tailgating became a bigger part of my trip than I expected. I was originally going to "tailgate" myself and do my cookouts and sell t-shirts or interview fans at my spot. That was until New Orleans fans started to send me menus before the trip had started and I realized it would be wise to check out other people's tailgates.

So much of the sport is regional, and many great tailgaters come out regardless of weather or if their team is doing well or not. I met Joe Cahn in Cleveland and he told me that "tailgating" is like a reception for a banquet. The game being the banquet of course. I have always loved the reception part of a function.

I was first struck by tailgating in Arizona when they hosted my favorite team, the Bears, for Monday Night football. I walked out of that game before the end, knowing my Bears had lost. Until in the car park I saw hollering and screaming. I rushed over to see the Bears get back in the game, on someone's flat screen on their car. This concept of tailgating and staying in the car parks intrigued me, and gave me the idea for the trip.

If people want to read about the actual game

they can pick up a newspaper, but back home I have been watching the NFL my whole life and until this point I had never heard of tailgating. So I feel exposing The Tailgate to the U.K is my way of showing, nay proving to them, that going to an NFL game is not just the sport that they see on the field, but the community of the tailgate.

In December it was my second anniversary with Steph, my girlfriend. I flew her out for the Bucs at Panthers Monday Night game, to give her a chance to experience tailgating without particularly enjoying the sport. She had a great time at the tailgates, apart from Kansas City, where the second coldest game in Chiefs history was a little too much for both of us!

By the time Steph had come out I was onto game 33 and was far less impressionable than I was at the start, but for Steph she was really surprised about the amount of dedication and hardwork people put into their parties. Her feelings took me back to the start of the trip again, and it was great going to the games with her.

Some places were better, and I was able to spend more time with some teams that others so it is impossible to rank any of the teams or tailgates. The NFL is very regional, with regards to culture, language, food, and so on, more so than the U.K media would like to think. It is not all chain restaurants and chain hotels. The sheer vastness of different kinds of foods I have eaten has blown me away, from lobster to Chateau Briand, to ten different types of hot dogs, to ten different types steak. The people are as diverse as their food, and I have met some amazing characters along the way.

To see two opposing fans enjoy food and drink at the stadiums is so amazing, because in England the fans have to be split up outside the stadium and in! Hopefully if I can expose the tailgate community experience to the U.K, then perhaps we can have more friendly sporting experiences and hopefully our own NFL team some day! 🔥

THE QUEST FOR 31: A YEAR IN REVIEW

By Hans Steiniger

In September 2006, I began what I called "The Quest for 31", my personal pilgrimage to attend an NFL game in each stadium in the National Football League. I realized from the beginning that the home team experience takes on a very regional flavor as one moves amongst the 31 venues dotted throughout the American landscape. And why wouldn't it? NFL fans are as die hard and supportive a bunch as you'll find throughout the major sports leagues. Rain or



shine; snow, blizzards, or howling wind, you'll always find these fans tailgating in a stadium parking lot on any given Sunday.

Throughout my travels, I've marveled at the ability of football fans to sculpt a

TRIPPING ON THE QUEST

Adam and Hans have both visited a number of football stadiums in their many adventures around the league. The following is a summary of the best and worst the NFL has to offer.

ADAM	HANS
NFL STADIUMS VISITED	
33	26
MOST IMPRESSIVE STADIUM	
Lucas Oil Stadium Indianapolis, IN	University of Phoenix Glendale, AZ
BEST STADIUM FOR WATCHING FOOTBALL	
Lambeau Field Green Bay, WI	Qwest Field Seattle, WA
BEST STADIUM FOOD	
Arrowhead Stadium Kansas City, MO	Qwest Field Seattle, WA
BEST TAILGATING FOOD	
University of Phoenix Glendale, AZ	Reliant Stadium Houston, TX
BEST CITY	
Chicago, Illinois	San Francisco, CA
LOUDEST STADIUM	
Qwest Field Seattle, WA	Qwest Field Seattle, WA
STADIUM WITH THE LEAST ATMOSPHERE	
Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	Edward Jones Dome St. Louis, MO
COMFIEST SEATS	
Louisiana Superdome New Orleans, LA	Gillette Stadium Foxboro, MA
BEST STADIUM MASCOT	
Jackson DeVille Jacksonville Jaguars	Big Red Arizona Cardinals
BEST AWAY FANS	
Pittsburgh Steeler Fans	Green Bay Packer Fans
FRIENDLIEST FANS	
Houston Texans Fans	Green Bay Packer Fans
MOST PASSIONATE FANS ON GAMEDAY	
Dallas Cowboys Fans	Oakland Raider Fans
MOST HARDCORE FANS	
Buffalo Bills Fans	Buffalo Bills Fans
COLDEST GAME	
KC vs MIA – Arrowhead Stadium December 21, 2008 (-10F)	CHI vs. JAC – Soldier Field December 7, 2008 (10oF)
BEST GAME	
PHI at DAL – Texas Stadium September 15, 2008	SD at NE – Gillette Stadium September 16, 2007

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unique cultural experience, infusing local customs, foods, and climate, into what has become a celebration of our diversity as fans of the National Football League. From the Cheeseheads in Green Bay, to the Terrible Towel Wavers in Pittsburgh, to the Tomahawk Chop Chanters in Kansas City, each NFL fanbase has molded a unique hometown experience that's interwoven local culture with the football team they live to support. This is why I Quest for 31, to obtain a first hand appreciation, through immersive study, for exactly what it's like to be a fan of every football franchise in the NFL.

Now in my third year, the Quest for 31 has really emerged as an experience unto itself, and this year has been my finest work to date. At the start of the season, I prepared a twelve game tear through the NFL, including visits to some of the more interesting NFL Stadiums in the league. I began the year in September with a trip to the Bay Area for a Week 1 double header. San Francisco played on Sunday in historic Candlestick Park and the Oakland Raiders took on the Denver Broncos at McAfee Coliseum on Monday Night Football.

I've always been fascinated by the fans of Raider Nation. The lengths to which Raiders fans will go to in support of their team is incredible, so attending a game at McAfee Coliseum was definitely one of the Quest for 31 trips I was most looking forward to. To do it right, however, I had to go in costume. Therefore an alter ego, complete with facepaint, spike-stunned leather, and shoulder pads had to be crafted for me to truly appreciate Raider Nation in style. This was my inspiration for transforming myself into the JOkeRaiDer, part Heath Ledger homage, part hardcore Raider Nation.

I began by coloring my hair fluorescent green and applying the silver and black facepaint before donning the shoulder pads and chrome-spiked arm guards that completed the JOkeRaiDer ensemble, and as soon as we hit the parking lot at McAfee Coliseum, I knew I was home. Silver and Black dominated the landscape as people from all walks of life swapped stories and drank their icy cold beverages of choice. The parking lot itself was alive with the energy of an Ozzfest freak show. Costumed fans roamed the aisle ways, midgets raced around on beer keg scooters, and stilt walkers towered over the entire proceeding (I fit right in.) Raider Nation certainly lived up to its reputation and beckons for my return.

A ten hour road trip in October took me to Minneapolis, Minnesota to watch the proud Minnesota Vikings franchise at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome (I still regret not purchasing some Viking horns to wear for that game.) The



Metrodome is situated in the downtown area, but a wild and vibrant tailgating culture prevails as parking lots throughout the city host tailgaters and their gear. Fans setup shop as early as 7:00am and the lots quickly fill up with custom Viking tailgating trucks, including RV's, mini-buses, and panel vans. I was actually overwhelmed by the number of Viking-themed trucks that showed up on gameday. Many of them had custom paint jobs and plush interiors to serve as a great base of operations for the day, but the Ultimate Tailgating Cruiser, in my humblest of opinions, is the Battle Wagon.

The Battle Wagon is the brainchild of Doug, Terry, TJ, and Michael, and it's awesome! These guys have transformed a 1966 Chevy Stepup Van into the ultimate man-cave on wheels. Sporting a set of Viking horns on the hood, with a satellite dish, wood paneled walls, living room furniture, and an Astroturf floor, the Battle Wagon is the envy of all who drop by for a beer. But what sets the Battle Wagon apart from the pretenders, is the custom propane fireplace that puts out 28,000BTU's to keep the fellas warm and toasty during the harsh Minnesota winter weather. Hanging out by the fire, watching the flatscreen TV, and drinking a frosty, locally brewed beverage, makes you wonder why anyone bothers with the game - but I went in anyway.

My hometown of Buffalo, New York boasts some of the best tailgating in the NFL. Buffalo Bills fans are die hard, cold weather tailgaters and exceptional blacktop culinarians. But to locate the best of us, you need only seek out the legendary Kenny "Pinto Ron" Johnson. Kenny easily takes the award for most unique tailgate in the NFL. His chariot of choice is the 1980 red Ford Pinto that he drives to each and every Bills game, both home and away. The hood of his vehicle has become quite a versatile cooking surface as well. Kenny sets up multiple charcoal grills and uses hand tools and garden implements to cook the day's meal, all positioned on the rusted hood. A garden rake

is used for flame-broiling burgers, a handsaw fries bacon, and an old hubcap is used as a pan for brats and dogs. Kenny also employs an old Army helmet as a deep fryer to make Buffalo Chicken Wings; and a paint tray filled with blue cheese dressing is used for dipping. His solution for an omelet and pancake station? How about a garden shovel. According to Kenny, it makes a great frying pan. But the main event, apart from the 16-pound shot (guests drink 100-proof liquor out of the thumbhole of Kenny's bowling ball) has to be the "Ketchup Opening Ceremony" at 11:00am on gameday.

The Ketchup Opening Ceremony finds Kenny with a naked burger looking for something to accentuate his charcoal-broiled, red meat patty. When he asks for ketchup, condiment snipers perched on the rooftop of his panel van, douse him from head to toe with some of the largest ketchup bottles I've ever seen. This is an event that's not to be missed if you're in town for a visit.

My most exciting adventure of the year had to be "The Proposal," which occurred in front of 65,000 fans at University of Phoenix Stadium during a Cardinals game in December. My girlfriend Crystal nearly fainted when she was taken completely by surprise, after reading the scoreboard message that asked her to marry me (Cliché? Maybe, but vintage Hans Steiniger, there's no doubt about that.) I was ready with a ring, the Cardinals Mascot "Big Red", and legions of digital camera wielding fans, who were prepared to capture the moment on film. Some well-connected locals and tailgating die-hards assisted me in to pulling off this coordinated effort, and to them I am deeply indebted. In a way, I think it was a rather appropriate way to propose to the only woman who would put up with a guy like me.

So I guess that was my year, twelve games, nine new stadiums, and best of all, my fiancée to cap off the year. Next year, with twenty-six NFL stadiums down, I will attack "The Final Five," to bring my journey to a close. 🔥