

## **Nic Knows: A view from the press box**

*Nic Knows is a weekly series that gives fans a behind-the-scenes look at different aspects of the Cheyenne Grizzlies organization. From the sights and sounds of a game inside the dugout to traveling with the team on a road trip; from the role of the grounds crew to what it takes to try out for the Big Leagues, fans will feel so close it's like they're actually with the team.*

I've been to the four fields that host MCBL teams and it is quite evident that Cheyenne's Pioneer Park has the most history behind it. Pioneer Park, though, also is host to the nicest press box in the MCBL.

Most press boxes mean a small shed that is attached to the top of the bleachers. They are cramped when more than two people step foot inside and experience extreme heat variations depending on the weather outside.

On Monday I went inside Greeley's press box because it began to rain. Little good it did of keeping me out of the rain, as a mixture of the liquid and wind blew all of the water straight into our faces, soaking the score books and computers inside the box. I was fourth person to enter the press box. It fits two. I was crammed in the back corner, having to lower my head each pitch to see the play. With four people inside, the door could barely open to let someone out.

Fortunately, we do not experience this in Cheyenne. Pioneer Park's press box is the five-star of press boxes.

### **June 17, 2010 - 6:11 p.m.**

I enter the press box and precede up the stairs—yes, I said stairs, and did I mention the box is carpeted? The press box features a granite table right up against the window (seats four) and has room behind for several others to stand or sit.

I meet Brian Box, the new public address announcer and say hi to Zach Ward, who is in charge of music and sound effects. Brian, Zach and myself are the three people who work inside the press box, Zach in front of the computer, Brian behind the mike and myself running the scoreboard and score book.

Jeremiah Johnke of the Wyoming Tribune Eagle is also in attendance tonight.

### **6:23 p.m. - Pregame**

Brian: "Good evening fans and welcome to historic Pioneer Park."

Sheryl of Magic City, who was the game's sponsor, makes her way up the press box steps to prepare for the singing of the National Anthem. Brian introduces Sheryl, she sings and it's now time to play ball.

#### **6:52 – Middle of 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Margarita Smith, in charge of marketing and promotions, comes in and gives us a few announcements to make. The Grizzlies have just taken the lead and all is good in the press box.

#### **7:11 – Middle of 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Brian, Zach and myself look through a baseball trivia book to find a question for our first trivia of the night. We find a quote and Brian reads it off.

Brian: Who once said, "If it weren't for baseball I'd either be in the penitentiary or the cemetery?" Come up to the press box with your answer to win a can of worms."

Don is the first fan to come up and he correctly identifies the quote as being said by Babe Ruth. Don wins the gummy worms and Brian announces that "Don has worms."

#### **7:42 – 4th inning**

Zach explains to Brian, who is announcing for the first time, about the Dizzy Bat Race.

Zach: You really have to encourage them. Make them keep spinning; when they get to nine spins keep counting, you know, like, nine, nine and a half, nine and three-quarters. The crowd loves it if they fall down.

The three contestants come out, Brian makes them spin more than they should and, sure enough, one of the contestants falls down while trying to run to first base to claim the free T-shirt.

#### **8:06 – Bottom of 5<sup>th</sup>**

It's time to select another trivia question.

Brian: In 1941, Willie Mays became the first African American player to receive what team distinction?

A fan comes bolting up the stairs, "Is it MVP?"

Brian: Not MVP

Two more come up several minutes later.

Woman: Gold glove?

Girl: MVP?

Brian: No, nope. Try again, keep working, Google it.

Several moments pass and it looks like we might have stumped the fans. Brian looks at the can of gummy worms and is shocked to see the container contains 700 calories. He's interrupted by a girl.

Girl: Is it team captain?

Brian: (Pause) Yes, persistence pays off.

Over the speakers, he announces, "Congrats Angelina, good work and enjoy your worms."

### **8:06 p.m. – Still 5<sup>th</sup> inning**

Owner and general manager Ron Kailey enjoys the view from the press box for an inning. Walks haunt the Foxes and the Grizzlies come around four more times to bring the score to 9-0. There's a traditional rule in press boxes that no cheering is allowed. Ron breaks that rule.

### **8:18 p.m. – 6<sup>th</sup> inning**

Zach shows me his computer that is filled with 20 gigabytes worth of music. I ask him how he got involved with this gig and he explains that he wants to become a radio host.

"I'm running music, but instead of being on air, I'm on a field right now," he says.

He shows me more of his library. The program he uses has tabs with different kinds of audio: music, rock music, movie clips, soundbites, etc.

"When the team is warming up I'll play some some good music to get them fired up," Zach explains. "When we're winning I'll play some rock music because it's a good adrenaline boost and when we're losing I'll play something like "Don't Stop Believing" to get the fans back into it. It's fun getting fans into the music and pumping them up."

Fortunately there was no losing Thursday night.

His favorite part of the job is finding more clips and adding them to his personal collection. He enjoys playing movie clips that poke fun at the opposing team and his favorite byte is "the explosion with debris when a foul ball is hit. It really gets people to jump."

### **8:29 p.m. – Top of 7<sup>th</sup>**

Cannibals Concessions brings us up some complimentary food and drinks to enjoy while working. You don't want the media to go hungry.

Brian: "This is what I'm most looking forward to this summer."

### **8:42 p.m. – Bottom of 7<sup>th</sup>**

The fans sing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" and I begin to notice what a beautiful evening it is. There is a good crowd on hand and really nice weather.

Pioneer Park is the only field that has sliding windows in the press box. As mentioned above, if it's cold outside, it's cold inside the press box at most fields. If it's cold at Pioneer Park, we can shut the windows and watch the game in warmth. If it's a nice evening, we'll keep the windows open and enjoy the sounds of the game.

**9:02 p.m. – 8<sup>th</sup> inning**

I take time in between batters to talk to Brian about his role.

Brian wants to get into PA announcing professionally for the Rockies so he's using this as a springboard to jumpstart his career in announcing. Thursday was his first game but he received several compliments from fans in attendance.

"It's just something I've always been interesting in doing. I like interacting with the fans and getting them excited."

**9:17 p.m. – Top of 9<sup>th</sup> inning**

Margarita does her infamous "Tequila Dance", the Grizzlies record the final three outs and Brian thanks the fans for coming out.

Brian: Tonight's final score: Fort Collins Foxes two, your Cheyenne Grizzlies 10. Drive home safely and enjoy your night.

*Next week, in the second installment of Nic Knows, Nic tells his personal experience of what it's like to try out for the Big Leagues.*

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