

Interview Tripp Whitbeck, Mayor of NatsTown – www.honus.fr

Mr. Mayor, that represent the Washington Nationals for you ? How came the passion?

I grew up in New York City. I was a Mets fan. I went occasionally to Shea Stadium growing up, but it was (and still is) so expensive! When I arrived in Arlington, Virginia, I was still a big Mets fan. One day, I just decided to go to a Nationals game (they were playing the Mets). I bought a ticket in Section 135; it was Row A. I had no idea when I came to the game that the seat was right on the grass. It just felt right, and I had such a good time. I've been in Section 135 ever since. I bought tickets for the rest of that season (2008), and I've had season tickets since. My first year, I was in Row G. I've been in Row C every year since then. So much of my initial purchase was because two seats at Nationals Park cost less than one ticket at Shea Stadium (and the Nats' tickets are better!). So, it struck me as a smart purchase. It turned into more and more fun as I started going every night. It became a hobby that has just built more and more.

How did you get the idea to self- elect Mayor Natstown ?

I actually didn't call myself The Mayor of NatsTown. That was actually what the vendors started to call me. I was there every night, and back in 2009, 2010, and 2011, the team's record was so bad that I was very often the only fan in my Section. So, they started to call me, "The Mayor," as though I was overseeing the whole area. As more and more people started to show up as the team's record improved, the Nationals started referring to Nationals Park as "NatsTown." So, the vendors called me "The Mayor of NatsTown." It just stuck.

I've always been a big sports fan. I was my college's mascot for four years. I have always enjoyed rooting for my teams in a very theatrical way.

How your citizens (fans , players, club) welcomed your election until today ?

People who've seen me before -- I hope -- realize that I dance and dress up at pretty much every game. It's for fun. It's for team spirit. Very rarely -- but it can happen -- I'll have a couple of people who don't realize that this is my big hobby, and they'll get annoyed at my dancing, or my running around. You'd be surprised by how many people, though, who didn't understand me at first are now some of my biggest fans.

How do you motivate your team and administered ?

I think just attending a game is support. Many people have tickets, but they don't come to games. I see no purpose in owning tickets if I'm not going to come and enjoy the games. Hopefully, the team realizes how much I enjoy my time there.

The dancing is just because I feel like dancing. I like to have a very good time.

You can see on the internet a video of you dancing . To reach this level , it takes hours and hours of practice right? That 's what being a fan ?

There are dozens and dozens of videos of my dancing on YouTube (search: "Tripping in Section 135," or "Tripp Nationals"). I don't practice. I just do whatever pops into my head at the time. The dancing is never planned; I rely on feeling inspired by what the music guy plays over the speakers.

It must be a joy to be mayor of Natstown since the arrival of Strasburg and Harper in particular make the playoffs ? But it must have been difficult before ?

It's definitely easier to cheer for a team which is winning. Of course, because I was very often the only fan in my area, I became known as "The Mayor." So, maybe I never would have received the nickname if the team had not had difficulties before.

Nats can they target the World Series in the coming years ?

I had been telling people back in 2011 that 2013 was going to be "our year." Of course, that didn't work out. I have been telling people now that 2014 is "our year." I expect to be right!

Become a fan of Nats is also being a fan of the Montreal Expos ? Is there still a link between the two

teams among current fans Nats ?

I was never a fan of the Expos. I grew up a Mets fan. When I first moved around Washington, I was both a Mets and a Nationals fan. I decided to root for whichever team needed the win more (at the time, the Mets had a better record). Now, I'm much more of a Nationals fan, but I like seeing the Mets do well. Yet, I know very little about the Expos; I've only visited Montreal once in my life (and it was as a tourist... not the Mayor!).

Nats fans are not known to be the most numerous and the most fervent in MLB. Urban legend?

There are a couple of difficulties the Nats face:

(1) Washington, DC -- as a general matter -- tends to be both a transient (here for a few years) population, and it tends to have people move in from other areas of the country. Therefore, the population here tends to have imported their previous favorite clubs. I mean, I came to Washington as a Mets' fan. My enjoyment of the team and the experience has made me a very proud Nats' fan.

(2) Also, the Nats' farm system was decimated when MLB owned the Expos. Winning always begets winning, and fans will spend money on a winning team. The team has only recently (within the last four or five years) had resources and has built a farm system to support the Major League product.

What players really represent the Nats spirit ?

I'd have to say Jayson Werth and Bryce Harper, for very different reasons. Werth is all about winning; his daily objective is to win, and his purpose in coming to the Nationals was to help the team turn into a winner. It was really quite interesting -- the entire "tone" and "feel" of the games and the team changed when Werth debuted. As for Harper, his intensity has gotten him into trouble (as it did a couple of times for Pete Rose). Still, his intensity and energy are fantastic things to witness. I look forward to his return to the team. You are a man of law respected and respectable one side and Mayor Natstown another. This is the big difference .

How to live your loved ones and your clients?

I just have fun, and try to have a good time with whatever I do. I don't let my work affect the Nationals and the Nationals don't affect my work.

A word to the end, Mr. Mayor ?

I hope all of your readers (and you) will come to Nationals Park (and Section 135) soon. I've been "presiding" there for years, and I hope to be there for many many more years!

Thank Mister Mayor !