

Boo Cowbells!

By

Dorothy Rosby

I'll admit right up front: I know nothing about my topic today. I know what you're saying. "You write about things you know nothing about all the time." Yes, I do, but normally I don't admit it. You could say I'm making progress.

And, in the case of professional hockey, I know less than usual, having only been to a couple of hockey games. Oh yes, and I once cracked my chin open when I tripped over a hockey stick on the ice, but that's the limit of my experience. The sporting event I'm most accustomed to is Little League baseball and the two have nothing in common, except that there's a stick involved and you can get hot dogs at both games.

So I couldn't wait to share my impressions of an exciting minor league hockey game I recently attended between the Rapid City Rush and the Bossier-Shreveport Mudbugs, whose name alone should have made them an underdog. (Rather than attempt any kind of play-by-play, I'll just say right now, it didn't work that way.)

I knew the basics: Dress warm and bring ear plugs. Apparently at many hockey games, including this one, fans show their unbridled enthusiasm by ringing cowbells. I'm not sure why; I grew up in cattle country and I never once saw cows playing hockey.

I was even given a free cowbell before the game. I would have preferred free nachos since I have no cows at home. But I took the bell anyway and put it in my pocket with the wrapper still on it, thinking it would be one less cowbell ringing during the game--not that you'd notice.

I thought it was very thoughtful and touching that when one woman sang a lovely rendition of the National Anthem, another woman signed it for all the regulars who've lost their hearing due to cowbells.

I will say the game was worth getting noisy over. If I were the type to ring a cowbell in the ear of the person sitting beside me, I would have done it. The Rush scored first and it was back and forth until the end when the Mudbugs won 4-2. With my safety orange ear plugs in, I could ignore the cowbells--ignore might be too strong a word--and get into the game. And a hockey game is a lot like a playground full of sixth grade boys except it's on ice and the sixth graders behave better. There was a lot of shoving and hitting with sticks going on and I kept asking my husband, "Can he do that?" He never really answered, but I think the answer was, "Yes, until he gets caught."

Finally someone would get mad and throw a punch and the referees would watch for awhile, while everyone cheered and rang their cowbells. Eventually the officials sent the offenders off to the penalty box, though not nearly as fast as you'd get hauled off to jail if you acted that way in the parking lot after the game. There was even a "Fight of the Night" and I don't think it's any coincidence that it was sponsored by a law firm. (Maybe the prize was free legal fees.)

I noticed a few other things you can apparently do at adult games that you can't do at kid's games, and I don't just mean drink beer. For example, yelling at the officials and booing are both frowned upon in Little League. There was an effort to make peace when all the fans did the wave. I've always thought of the wave as sort of the "Kum Ba Yah" of any sporting event, but it didn't put an end to the fighting or the booing. Frankly, if I was going to boo about anything, it would be the cowbells.

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