
Watching Football On the Yard

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We've got to stop scheduling Morgan State for homecoming.
I saw it go up.

Coach Carey Bailey had just called a great play-action pass for the Bison, leading to an awesome bootleg and toss from QB Floyd Haigler to his running back who scampered into the end zone for six. However, nothing is guaranteed in college football, and our kicker's extra point attempt sailed wide right.

Final Score: Morgan State 31, Howard 30. And I saw it all from WHUT's big screen TV on the Yard.

To me, watching the football game from the Yard is one of the most underrated experiences of Homecoming weekend at Howard. Every year a collection of folks from diverse backgrounds and different eras to trek across this country and return to HU.

Though our American economy screams for reform and our wallets cry for attention, the students and alumni refuse to allow this sacred tradition to die.

This multitude of globetrotters and world-changers take a collective break from their lives and muster the resources to gather annually at the Hilltop for their Howard University Homecoming.

For that collection of hours, Howard is more than a simple getaway weekend.
Howard is home.

Every year, the Yard eagerly awaits the return of this huddled mass. Shop owners fight to claim their space along the economic triangle in front of the Carnegie Building, knowing that legions of alumni will walk through to bargain for extravagant paintings and creative Obama T-shirts.

During the football game these shop owners are even busier than they were during Yardfest. Further down towards Douglass Hall, the smell of food circulates the air and draw hour-long lines filled with people who clamor for the taste of home cooking. Though Howard's fashion show ends on the Thursday night before game day, a stream of new designs and unique threads continue to travel throughout the crowd, voicing the individuality of its wearers.

On the Yard, Homecoming IS football. To the appreciative Yard crowd, the unknown defensive linebacker before the game that later drilled a Morgan State running back during the game will forever be known by the nickname of "Coop."

The reserve kicker that boots the football through the uprights on only his second career field goal attempt receives genuine cheers because of his resiliency. To these fans, Howard football brings back pleasant memories and toothy smiles.

While the final score on this day may signal another Howard loss, these fans will always remember this team played with intensity and character, attributes that they also strive to exhibit in their daily lives.

Sure, Yard football fans know that overtime action may bring a huge amount of stadium fans that left the stands too quickly in order to beat the traffic or prepare for their future activities after the game. However, the additional fans that join the group add the right amount of nervous excitement and energy to the crowd, wincing and holding their breath along with the Yard fans after every extra snap in overtime.

However different, the constant thread that ties all Homecoming game fans together will still remain the same. We all take joy in watching our players don those blue and white uniforms on that Saturday afternoon.

For those four hours, watching the Homecoming game on the projection screen with folks on the Yard is like piling into a family member's living room on Thanksgiving to watch football before scarfing down the pot roast and greens. On this Saturday, millions of people around the globe treasure this experience because Howard represents that family. Heck, Howard University is family.

I'm just happy to have a seat at the table. And a spot on the Yard, too.

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