

A couple of weeks ago I got to go to a football game with my son Danny. But not just any football game, "THE" football game. The BCS Championship bowl game between the Florida Gators and the Oklahoma Sooners. Okay so that may not mean much to you, but for football fans, it meant the hottest ticket in town. Never mind how we came across the two tickets, the sweet thing is that my hubby, being the great guy that he is (plus it doesn't hurt that he's a UM alumnus and a Gator-hater), offered his seat to me saying "You went to that school, so you go." To which I promptly responded, "Okay." Don't need to tell you the look on his face. Gator-hater and all, he was as excited about the opportunity of going to the game as I was. But like I said, he's a great guy.

Terrific, except I figured my son would not be down for the deal because what 13-year old boy wants to be seen at such gigantic event with his mother? I mean, sure, Danny and I are close, he's my grocery shopping partner, we bike ride, toss the ball around some (I happen to like sports), and even slap each other around often (that game I'm gonna have to put an end to soon if I don't wanna end up getting hurt, given his growth spurts as of late). But the bottom line is that he and Dad are skin-tight, and big football games belong to fathers and sons. So I thought nah, this isn't gonna fly. I think my husband thought the same thing. Until Danny said he really didn't care much who took him as long as he got to go. Such tactfulness…NOT! Great timing for it though… wink, wink. During the next few days, however, I did have second thoughts about going. Being the big game it was I wondered whether he would have a good time going with *me*. But instead of folding, I started seeing in this the opportunity for us to make one of those lasting memories together. The kind he would tell his own kids about. At least that's what I hoped it would be.

Game day came and my hubby dropped us off at the stadium (all the limos in town had been rented…no, not really). We power-walked through the parking lot amidst a slew of tailgating fans who looked like they had been there a wee-bit too long if you know what I mean. For a minute there it sorta felt like we were "walking the line." But since no one had won or lost yet, everyone was in good spirits so we made it in safe. We entered our gate and took our seats. Three seconds later we were gone for food and memorabilia. Danny and I

walked like crazies scouting the stadium stores and concession stands. We returned junk food loaded, heavy on orange and blue beads, and sporting Gator sweatshirts. Well what did you expect; we had to look the part, no?

As kickoff time neared, the stadium filled with a sea of orange and blue. It almost seemed the entire Gainesville population was at Dolphin Stadium, which by the way saw its largest crowd ever to watch a football game there. Talk about home field advantage. It felt like I was back at the Swamp. Trust me, I remember it still. Yikes! So far we were having a good time and the game hadn't even started. Once it did though, things got serious and down to business. We had a job to do. To roar at the top of our lungs, and even louder on third downs. That was our job and we did it dutifully and proudly. HA! It was fun. So far Danny looked like he was having a good time. I was glad about that. By the time half-time came around, our ears were ringing. We needed a break so we went inside for some more food and some more junk to buy. This time a disposable camera since with all the excitement during drop off, we both forgot our digital in the limo, I mean the SUV. Our stroll around the lounge area included an unexpected bump into Bob Costas, yeah you know, that giant of the sportscasting world; figuratively that is, because the guy is Danny's size, we almost missed him. We rushed back for the second half and made our way to our seats high-fiving everyone in our row because by this time in a football game if you're not at that point with those around you, you're a dead beat. And my son and I weren't there to be deadbeats. No, we weren't, and we got pictures to prove it.

The second half was even louder. The day after the game I read an article which said that a field-level decibel-reading devise indicated the noise during parts of the game was equal to that of a jet engine. The entire game was like that, but even more so during the fourth quarter. I don't think we sat down but a few minutes all game long. Danny and I cheered along with every other rooter to every single cheer there was, Gator chomping along to the theme of Jaws and in the face of every Sooner we saw. It was fun, to say the least. Especially since the Gators won. We stayed through the end of the trophy presentation, as we sat back in our seats totally exhausted by this time, and watched Tebow and his John 3:16 scripture painted face walk around the stadium shaking hands with fans.

Meanwhile, across the highway, our chauffeur was maneuvering through the traffic madness. We eventually made our long walk back to our pick up point, somewhere out there around the stadium, where we met up with the limo, I mean the SUV, as it swiftly picked us up while still in movement. Yeah there was no going around again for that driver, the poor guy. Thank you honey for giving up your seat and for so graciously getting us there and back. As we sat there tired, our voices hoarse, and our heart rates just then returning to normal, Dad asked, "How was it?" — "Awesome," his son said. So it sounded like I had held my own, scoring about an 8 in the "football buddy" department, with zero embarrassments. I did wait for him outside the men's bathroom, but c'mon, what you want from me?

In the end, I thank God for the opportunity He gave me to make yet another lasting memory. One I will hold dear and high up there with those to come — his graduation, his wedding, his children's births….But it was just a football game you say. Not to me. And I hope one day, if and when the topic arises while reminiscing with one of his own, he'll say, "That game? Oh yeah, I went to that game with your grandmother. It was wild…." : )

-by Connie Perez

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