

TOP OF THE SECOND

Coors Field and Target Field

THE ONLY SPORT THIS WORKS FOR

7:55 p.m. | Friday, June 17

The upper deck of Coors Field is adorned with a single row of purple seats that wrap continuously around the top sections, forming a thin line of vivid color that clashes against the remaining sea of dark-green seats. This line stands to mark 5,280 feet above sea level, offering the fun ability for fans to claim that they were (physically) a mile high while watching the hometown Rockies play baseball. In right center, a small fountain and an impressive collection of evergreen trees ooze into the visitor's bullpen, mirroring forestry one would find in the nearby Rocky Mountains.

The four of us had randomly stumbled on "Free Taco Night" at Coors, a promotion at the ballpark where if the Rockies scored at least seven runs in that night's game, attendees could bring their tickets to a participating Taco Bell restaurant the following day for a complimentary assortment of tacos. Each sporting giveaway T-shirts that bluntly stated WE WANT TACOS on the front, we cheered as the Rockies went on to score seven runs in the first two innings, eventually besting the visiting Tigers 13–6. Yet seeing as we had to depart for Minneapolis immediately following the game, we never got to cash in our tickets for the free food (understandably, there were no Colorado Rockies-participating Taco Bell locations in the state

of Minnesota). I still have my T-shirt, however, and I still maintain that Coors Field owes me tacos.

Outside of our cheers for free food, the four of us spent the majority of the evening being entertained by a large purple dinosaur that wandered between the various sections of the ballpark, interacting with fans and doing its best to get them to start chants throughout the game. This thing is “Dinger,” the Rockies mascot.

Allow me to admit that baseball mascots are incredibly confusing at times. Some are easy to understand: the Pittsburgh Pirates’ mascot is a patch-eyed buccaneer while the Milwaukee Brewers have “Bernie the Brewer,” a yellow-haired man who used to slide into a vat of beer whenever a Milwaukee player hit a home run. Other mascots, however, don’t quite make sense. In Seattle, for example, we have the “Mariner Moose” while in Philadelphia they have this strange green alien thing called the “Philly Phanatic.” Then, just as you are thinking that some teams simply fell to alliteration to represent their ball club, the Oakland Athletics’ mascot is a large white elephant.

And although I am still attempting to discern the reasoning behind the A’s choice, the Rockies’ purple dinosaur—which, yes, does look unfortunately like Barney—actually has a cool story behind it. When construction broke ground on Coors Field, the workers discovered a dinosaur egg buried deep beneath the earth on which they were preparing to build the stadium.⁴ Figuring that they had to somehow incorporate this odd find into the ballpark, the team’s front office decided that their mascot would now be a large dinosaur, which was introduced in 1994 by being ceremoniously hatched from the egg to the tune of “Wild Thing.”⁵ Its purple color is the alternative hue of the Rockies—the same color that fills the aforementioned seats that stand a mile high in Coors Field.