

Big Train Fan Focus Group – Food at the Ballpark – Tuesday, March 16, 2021 – Summary Report

Big Train President Bruce Adams welcomed the 26 participants to the first of the Big Train's three fan focus groups to be held this Spring to gather fan input as part of our planning for the 2021 season. Bruce explained that the new board of the reconstituted Bethesda Community Base Ball Club (BCBBC) is dedicated to being one of the country's most welcoming and fan friendly environments in all of baseball.

The BCBBC board established a work group chaired by John Daniel to rethink and dramatically improve the food offerings at Povich Field. This fan focus group is an important part of the work group's process.

Bruce explained that we are working hard on a plan to submit to the County to allow for about 250 fans for each game at Povich – about one-third capacity. Bruce thanked Patrick Chapman for designing a 250-fan seating plan for 2021 that was shown to participants.

As part of our plan for a significant improvement in the quality and range of food offerings this summer at Povich Field, we are pleased to announce that we have three partners here to present.

Bruce first introduced Chris Fargiano, the director of operations at Gregorio's Trattoria. Chris explained that Gregorio's has been providing food at Povich Field in recent years.

Bruce next introduced Chris Van Jura, the owner of Catalyst Hot Dogs. Chris said he has years of experience in the food management business. During the pandemic Chris realized a lifelong ambition and launched a hot dog food truck business.

Our third partner and presenter was Marjorie Lane of our long-time fan-favorite Bruster's Ice Cream.

After introductions, Bruce asked each of our partners to share their ideas for improving the food choices at the ballpark.

Chris Fargiano (Gregorio's Trattoria – www.gregoriostrattoria.com)

Chris explained that BCBBC had asked him to manage food services at Povich Field. This will ensure a professionally run operation. He pointed out that the proximity of Gregorio's in Cabin John Mall to Povich Field will make it easy to transport food.

Chris suggested the following food options:

- Pizza (slices, personal size pizzas)
- Subs (steak and cheese, Italian)
- Wraps (chicken pesto, chicken Caesar)
- Salad (garden, Caesar, chopped)
- Cannolis for dessert

Big Train fans suggested:

- Arugula pear salad with candied walnut (but nervous about salads sitting in the heat)
- Chicken tenders and French fries
- Meatball sliders
- Vegan items (mushrooms)
- Pasta meals if wanted need to order before the game (but possibly too hot for pasta)
- Slices (quick)
- Hot pretzels with cheese sauce
- Dessert options -- pop tarts, cookies, brownies
- Smoothie/juice options
- Drink options -- lemonade, Arizona ice teas, Gatorade, sparkling water.

Chris Van Jura (Catalyst Hot Dogs – www.catalysthotdogs.com)

Chris suggested the following food options:

- Regular hotdogs (he uses Roseda Farms all beef: www.rosedabeef.com)
- Vegan hotdogs (soy based)
- Will feature regions/countries that BT players are from to be diverse in the kinds of hotdogs
- Will have multiple people helping so fans are not standing around.

Big Train fans suggested:

- Burgers (cheeseburger, classics)
- Have a small station to help with condiments
- Chips to go.

Marjorie Lane (Bruster's Ice Cream -- www.brusters.com/gaithersburg)

Marjorie explained what Bruster's has offered at Povich Field in previous years:

- six flavors every night
- will post on Facebook so fans will know which ones they are bringing
- always have a nondairy (Italian ice).

Big Train fans suggested:

- Coffee Oreo.

Chris Rogers (Big Train General Manager)

Chris Rogers shared an idea he said will improve convenience and safety for our fans. He explained we are planning to implement a mobile ordering system this Summer to enhance the fan experience and keep everybody socially distanced. Fans will be able to pre-order food before you get to the ballpark as well as order delivery directly from your seat so you don't have to miss a moment of the action. It will be just as if you were ordering takeout from a restaurant, fans will be able to go online hours before the game, place your order, and set the time that you want to pick it up. If you order two slices of pizza and a soda to be picked up at 6:45 p.m., when you walk in the ballpark at 6:45, there will be a box with your order and your name on it. You will have already pre-paid, so all you need to do is pick up it up and find your seat. Of course, our regular concessions lines will be open as well, so if you prefer to walk up to the Home Run Café or either of our vendor carts and order that way, you may. We believe this mobile ordering service will enhance the fan experience – less waiting in line, more watching the game – and help keep everyone spaced out at the ballpark this Summer.

Big Train fan comments:

- Nervous about food sitting in the heat waiting for pick up
- Make sure you user test the ordering app
- Nervous about food not being ready, so will miss the game waiting for food
- No coupons
- Need Wifi to be able to order.

Bruce then asked our partners to tell about some protocols they will have in place to handle sanitization and packaging the food. All mentioned masks and gloves. Chris Fargiano of Gregorio's mentioned the importance of sanitizing surfaces regularly and organizing lines and pickup windows to minimize any crowding that would violate social distancing rules.

Marjorie Lane of Bruster's explained they always have two people so that scooping and handling money are not done by same person.

Bruce then asked Chris Rogers to show the plan we have developed to allow 50 people to eat in the picnic pavilion while maintaining social distancing. Bruce explained that with all this great food but with a cap on attendance, BCBBC really wants to maximize the number of fans who decide to eat dinner at Povich. This is going to be critical to our ability to support our partners and make our budget work in this difficult environment. Bruce asked about ideas for encouraging more group outings. Big Train fans suggested businesses and school groups. With a limitation on people able to eat in the picnic pavilion, Bruce asked if it would help to have an awning over tables not in the pavilion. There was little interest in this from the Big Train fans in attendance. They said they preferred to sit in their seats and eat while watching the game.

Bruce thanked the Big Train fans for their input and thanked our food partners for their participation. Bruce reiterated that Big Train is dedicated to bringing the fun back to Povich Field this summer and running a fan-first operation. To make sure our fans are part of the conversation as we move forward, we will have two more fan focus groups in the coming weeks. The next one -- Fan Safety in the Covid Era -- will take place on Tuesday, March 30.