

One Shining Moment

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In the days leading up to Sunday's AFC Championship Game, the people of Pittsburgh treated us as their guests (and not the kind you're trying to get rid of). They offered smiles and hellos. They seemed determined to prove how friendly Western Pennsylvania could be.

Then came game day. It was like that car rental commercial with the two faced counted attendant. They flipped theirs around and got flat out mean. Our Jen Franciotti took the brunt of it post game with some words that I can't repeat here.

All the good will earned over two days vanished along with the Ravens Super Bowl hopes.

So we finish our coverage early Monday morning, just chilled to the bone. A lousy night's rest made for a grumpy wake up call. Nobody is in a good mood.

After packing up the car we set out to find a place for late morning breakfast. A little off the beaten path we find King's Family Restaurant in Monroeville. Kenny Brown (TV-11 photographer), Bryan James (TV-11 producer) and myself hunker down for one last bit of artery clogging before a return home.

Not a minute after we order a patron comes over to our booth. Given the heckling received last night, we were not expecting the best. The gentleman says he assumes we're from Baltimore. We say that we are, and he asks us how our weekend was.

The temptation to say what first popped in my head was huge, but the filter was on. We said it was a long trip, and we were hoping for another to Tampa, but it was a great season for the Ravens and frankly the Steelers were the better team.

Here's where it gets interesting.

The Steelers fan says something to the effect of: You probably had a hard weekend. Some of the fans can be rough. But I wanted you all to know not everyone in Pittsburgh's a jerk. He proceeded to drop a pair of 20 dollar bills on the table, proclaiming breakfast was on him.

We were stunned.

Not in a million years did we see that coming. We tried to return the money saying it really wasn't necessary (seriously, we did). But he was having none of that. He held the determined look of someone who had made up his mind to do something, and did it.

I caught up with him as he walked away, and we exchanged business cards. Our Pittsburgh Patron Saint was Chris "Coach" Gathagan from St. Edmund's Academy. He is their athletics director and obviously all around good guy.

You see the bumper stickers asking for random acts of kindness and maybe snicker. But the impact from that gesture of good will last much longer for me than any of the inebriated hecklers. I've already told this story a dozen times (including the five minutes I hijacked from Steve Davis' radio show on WBAL-AM).

So thank you Coach for your hospitality, thankfully it is our lasting memory from a trip to Pittsburgh.