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This giant Sox fan is a fixture behind the plate

The Boston Globe

By Mary Mulkerin Donius, Globe Correspondent | October 8, 2005

Red Sox Nation collided with Giant Country every Red Sox home game this season when Dennis Drinkwater, president of Giant Glass, took the best seat in the house directly behind home plate at Fenway Park.

And now that the season is over, he's not going to go into a funk -- he's just going to go to more football games.

If you watched Red Sox games, you couldn't miss him. He was there all night, every night, regardless of the temperature, the hour, or the opponent. He was front and center -- usually wearing a blue or red shirt -- and people always seemed to notice him.

"I get e-mails from people wondering where I went in the sixth inning," he says, "or they'll call and ask why I was wearing a jacket when it was so hot out."

Since he began sitting in the seats that were added behind the plate in 2003 he's become as familiar to regular viewers as the NESN broadcasters or the Foxwoods jingle. He doesn't exactly have a fan club but is often recognized inside and outside of Fenway. "People come up to me and say, 'You're the guy behind home plate.' I get a kick out of it," he says.

From his seat, Drinkwater feels as though he's in the game. He should. He's closer to the catcher than the pitcher is. And if his view is blocked, it's usually by the umpire.

He doesn't take vacations during the baseball season. "Why would I go to the Cape?" he asks. "There's nothing like being in the ball yard."

So if you've ever wondered about a guy whose days from April to October revolve around the Red Sox schedule or fantasized about sitting in the seat next to him, here's what Dennis Drinkwater thinks about cellphones, booing, and getting in and out of Kenmore Square 81 times a year.

Favorite player: Third baseman Bill Mueller. "If we had nine Bill Muellers, we'd win it all again."

First baseball game: Boston Braves vs. the Philadelphia Phillies, 1951. "My



mother took me," he says. "She got me into baseball."

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Game day ritual: Dines on lamb chops, salmon, or shrimp at The Capital Grille most nights before heading over to Fenway.

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Libations: Five or six bottles of spring water during the game.

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Pet peeve: Cellphone use during games. Drinkwater deputized himself to help the ushers keep people from using their cellphones and waving wildly at the camera while the game is going on. "It's too distracting to pitchers," he says. "People can use their cellphones between innings."

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On booing: Never does it. "How can you hate or boo a professional? It's illogical."

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Exit strategy: The regulars who sit around him call him "eight and two-thirds" for his habit of leaving his seat with one out remaining in the bottom of the ninth and making a bee-line for the ramp near the right-field concourse to watch the last out. Then he ducks to his car. "I'm on 93 before most people have left the park."

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Disaster plan: "If something drastic happens one way or the other when there's only one out left, I go back to my seat until the game is over."

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When the Sox are on the road: He watches from home, but does attend some away games.

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Seat mates: In his four seats, he's often joined by family; his wife, Jackie, or one of his two children, or three grandchildren.

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Hollywood moment: Robert Redford joined him for a game last Friday after a speech at Salem State College, which Giant Glass sponsored. "He's a huge fan," Drinkwater says of his new friend. "His parents were from Newton and the number 9 he wore as Roy Hobbs in 'The Natural' was dedicated to Ted Williams." They stayed for the whole game and ate at the bar at The Capital Grill afterward.

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Glory days: Drinkwater, a Wakefield native, captained the 1967 Salem State Vikings baseball team. What's in a name: Drinkwater named his company after the New York Giants football team. "I've followed them since I was 12," he says. "The Patriots weren't born then."

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The streak: He attended every New York Giants game, home and away, from 1986 until 2001.

Missed games: He missed only two Red Sox games this season, one for the New York Giants Foundation golf tournament and the other for the Patriots' opening night.

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When the season's over: He goes to a lot of Patriots' and Giants' games.■

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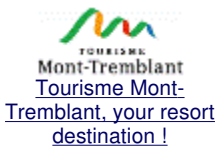
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