

Humility and the New Pirate Owner

by
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Growing up as the nephew of former Allegheny County Commissioner Tom Foerster was a tremendous honor. To know him personally is to know humility. Politics aside, his renown is not the Pittsburgh airport or any number of accomplishments with Allegheny County. Instead his legacy is simply what he is. And what he is will always be a special example to me.

My uncle introduced me to some wonderful people but none better than the late Art Rooney, Sr. I will always remember Mr. Rooney talking to me like I mattered and I will never forget his remarkable generosity toward me. To have met him personally was to have met humility. He was a remarkable man.

I grew up understanding that humility was the thread woven within the lives of truly great people. And I grew up never wanting the autograph of anyone except the signature of my parents who made me realize that virtue was something lived, not said.

Last month I was asked if I would introduce Pirate owner Kevin McClatchey at a StrongLand Chamber luncheon. I was not sure what to say about him. I had some misgivings because I questioned whether this wealthy Californian had a genuine interest in Pittsburgh. I wondered if he was just waiting out an opportunity to move the team to the west coast. But as a fan, I was pleased that anyone was willing to put up the money to keep the Pirates here for at least a couple more years. And I was impressed that a Pirate owner was willing to come to our area to speak about our team. So I agreed to make the speech.

The night before our luncheon I inadvertently glanced at a short TV segment about Kevin McClatchey. What I viewed was the long hours and hard work he was putting in at an office in Three Rivers Stadium. "Why was he doing this?" was my only thought. Why would a guy with millions want to gamble it on something that seemed so unlikely to succeed in Pittsburgh? At best, I thought he would show his face in Pittsburgh a few times throughout the summer to make it look like he cared. But this looked too good to be true. I was a little skeptical that I was watching what the owner wanted us to believe instead of reality.

On the day of the luncheon, I was seated to Kevin's left. To his right was the podium so he had no choice but to talk to me for the next 30 minutes as we ate lunch.

When he sat down he sort of nervously asked me what I did. When I told him that I worked in a bank as a peon, he smiled. I think we hit it off all right after that. We talked about our dogs, the Steelers, the Rooneys, the StrongLand area and industry.

The topics were unimportant. Character was what I was interested in uncovering. What I saw crack through was a driven man who wanted to take a risk to succeed in something that he dearly loved. What I saw crack through was a competitive fire that hated to lose in anything. What I saw crack through was a hard work ethic that was a perfect match for this area. And most important, what I saw crack through was that rare thread of humility not normally associated with someone of his stature.

In some ways, I think Kevin is a little over his head. In some ways, I think he will make some ugly mistakes. In some ways, I think he is better suited with anonymity. But in every way, I think Kevin is going to give this team his all. And in that way, I believe he is destined to overcome and succeed.

Kevin is the only baseball owner I ever met. He might be the only baseball owner that would give a regular fan like me the time of day. It is that thread of humility that I hope we get to know as fans. Beat 'em bucs.



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