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# Opinions

Thoughts from the Cone

## Living Major League dream in Buffalo

**BY TOM GIROT,  
"CONEHEAD"**

About twice a game, I am asked why I wear Bisons jersey No. 79. The answer is that, back in 1979, my childhood friend Jim Battaglia and I each put up \$500 to purchase one stock of the community-owned Double A Buffalo Bisons.

Buffalo was without professional baseball for the majority of the 1970s decade. Jim and I thoroughly enjoyed "owning" the Bisons; however, the team fell into bankruptcy and Bob Rich came to the rescue in 1983. In 1985, Bob returned Triple-A baseball to Buffalo and began the push for a new downtown stadium and Major League Baseball. Pilot Field (now

Sahlen Field) opened in 1988 and the Major League push was in full force.

Unfortunately, the Major League dream ended in 1991 when Buffalo was passed over in favor of Denver and Miami, the two new expansion National League franchises.

Over the last 30 years, Buffalo baseball fans have enjoyed top-notch Triple-A baseball, highlighted by the stable ownership of the Rich family.

I have occasionally worked Major League games in Cleveland and Detroit. However, my dream of either working at or attending Major League Baseball in my hometown went unfulfilled until this past June 1.

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The 24 Toronto Blue Jays games that I will have worked at Sahlen Field have been a highlight of my career. The ballpark is great, the energy of the fans has been fantastic, and the Blue Jays are really good!

Watching future Hall of Famer Vlad Guerrero Jr. on a daily basis is a real treat for any sports fan. It has been a great summer for me and, while I will miss the Blue Jays, I will follow them with renewed interest.

The Bisons are scheduled to return on Aug. 10, and I certainly look forward to seeing all the fans. In the meantime, I am most thankful for living my dream of Major League Baseball in Buffalo.



Buffalo Bisons affable beer vendor Conehead works the stands at a recent Blue Jays-Texas Rangers game. (Photo by Terry Duffy)

### Wet weather driving tips

## AAA offers advice for safe driving in the rain

**BY AAA OF WESTERN AND CENTRAL NEW YORK**

Spring and summer showers may help flowers, but wet pavement contributes to nearly 1.2 million traffic crashes each year. AAA reminds motorists to never drive through standing water as the region is experiencing heavy rain this summer. Downpours that create standing water during a storm can be dangerous, and motorists should never drive through standing water at any depth even in familiar areas. Repairs related to flooded vehicles can cost thousands of dollars and may not be covered by auto insurance.

Here are some tips from AAA for driving in the rain:

✓ Safety starts before hitting the gas, and drivers should aim to see and be seen. Replace windshield wiper blades that leave streaks or don't clear the glass in a single swipe. Make sure all headlights, taillights, brake lights and turn signals are properly functioning to remain visible to other drivers during rainy weather. Keep the vehicle's headlights turned on.

✓ Proper tire tread depth and inflation are imperative to maintaining good traction on wet roadways. Check tread depth with a quarter inserted upside down into the tire groove. If the area above Washington's head is visible, start shopping for new tires. Check each tire's pressure, including the spare, at least once a month ... and be sure to check the pressure when the tires are cold.

#### Avoid Cruise Control

Most modern cars feature cruise control. This feature works great in dry conditions, but when used in wet conditions, the chance of losing control of the vehicle can increase. To prevent loss of traction, the driver may need to reduce the car's speed by lifting off the accelerator, which cannot be accomplished when cruise control is engaged.

When driving in wet-weather conditions, it is important to concentrate fully on every aspect of driving. Avoiding cruise control will allow the driver more options to choose from when responding to a potential loss-of-traction situa-

tion, thus maximizing safety.

#### Slow Down and Leave Room

Slowing down during wet weather driving can be critical to reducing a car's chance of hydroplaning, when the tires rise up on a film of water. With as little as 1/12 inch of water on the road, tires have to displace a gallon of water per second to keep the rubber meeting the road. Drivers should reduce their speed to correspond to the amount of water on the roadway. At speeds as low as 35 mph, new tires can still lose some contact with the roadway.

To reduce chances of hydroplaning, drivers should slow down, avoid hard braking or turning sharply, and drive in the tracks of the vehicle ahead. Also, it's important for motorists to allow ample stopping distance between cars by increasing the following distance of the vehicle in front of them and slow down in advance before intersections or turns.

#### Responding to a Skid

Even careful drivers can experience skids. If a driver feels their

car begin to skid, it's important to not panic and to follow these basic steps:

✓ Continue to look and steer in the direction in which the driver wants the car to go.

✓ Avoid slamming on the brakes, as this will further upset the vehicle's balance and make it harder to control.

✓ If the car begins to skid, drivers should continue to look and steer in the direction they want the car to go. Don't panic, and avoid slamming on the brakes to maintain control. Overall, drivers need to be extra cautious in wet weather.

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