

Sports History Runs Deep In Cincinnati

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As the baseball boys of summer look ahead to the fall, sports lovers get ready for that cross over season when teams from both the National Football League (NFL) and Major League Baseball (MLB) can be seen in action. When the NFL launches its 2023-2024 season in early September, the MLB will head into the playoffs through early to late October, culminating in the World Series.



In Cincinnati, fans are clinging to the hope that their Reds might make the playoffs by grabbing a Wild Card berth in the Central Division of the MLB National League. Some hopes lie with Canadian-American all-star Joey Votto, who is a consistent Reds hitter and a lock for Hall of Fame membership.

The Cincinnati Reds is a storied club, whose most recent legacy includes dominant, back-to-back World Series championships in 1975 and 1976. A playoff berth is a long shot in 2023, but not out of the question.

A championship has been harder to achieve for the professional sports team that lives just a short distance away from the Reds home field at Great American Ball Park on the Ohio River.

The NFL Cincinnati Bengals toil at Paycor Stadium, on a nearby riverside site that can accommodate up to 65,500 fans. The Bengals have been in the NFL since 1968, and are yet to

win a Super Bowl championship – though coming close a few times, notably in a Super Bowl loss in 2022.

The history of the baseball Reds is on a much larger scale, as it is the oldest team in the Majors. The Reds have been playing ball as a pro club since 1869, first as the Cincinnati Red Stockings, then simply the Reds as of 1890.

This history can be experienced at the excellent Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame & Museum, which is a large, permanent space at Great American Ball Park. This hall and museum are in fact the largest dedicated facilities of their kind in the MLB, at 16,000 sq. ft, and the exhibits and attention to historic detail and accuracy is impressive. For example, on-demand tech is put to good use for quickly searching the stats, photography and films of famous players like Pete Rose.

But the best way to experience the Reds is at

Great American Ball Park, a modern stadium with all the expected amenities, but built specifically to showcase baseball in a more traditional way, with a smaller attendance capacity of 42,000.

TENNIS ANYONE?

The size of the Cincinnati market – a population of just 309,000 in the city (2.2 million in the greater metro area) – means that there is no NBA team or NHL team there. There is, however, a well-regarded professional tennis tournament that is popular amongst tennis pros as a tune-up for competition at the US Open grand slam tourney.

The Cincinnati Open just wrapped up (Aug. 20) with a final match that is now regarded as "one for the ages," as long-time top-ranked Novak Djokovic barely managed to beat next-generation hero Carlos Alcaraz. It goes down as the longest three-set ATP final this year.

The tournament – officially dubbed the Western & Southern Open – is held at the Lindner Family Tennis Center. It was first played at the Avondale Athletic Club in 1899, and it is the oldest professional tournament in the USA that is still played at its original venue. The Western & Southern Open is one of nine tennis tournaments in a series dubbed the ATP Masters, featuring the top ranked players on the ATP tour.

FINDLAY MARKET

All this sports spectating is bound to generate an appetite, and visitors who like an historical aspect to their vacation can get more of the same at the Findlay Market while curing their hunger pangs.

Findlay Market has been taking care of appetites since 1852, making it the oldest public market in the state of Ohio, and a cherished Cincy landmark. It was established by an early German immigrant community that was a centre of growth for the city in the mid-19th century.



CROWDS OF REDS FANS AT GREAT AMERICAN BALL PARK



SHOPPERS ON THE CENTRAL AISLE OF THE FINDLAY MARKET

Those German roots are confirmed by street names like Essen Strasse, which borders one side of the market, and the city district name Over-The-Rhine. That refers to the Miami and Erie Canal that once flowed near the market, separating this working-class neighbourhood from downtown Cincinnati. That canal has since been drained and covered over, but the name Over-The-Rhine -- echoing the Rhine River in Germany -- remains.

Over-The-Rhine has been through tough times, but starting in the early 2000s, Cincinnati embarked on an ambitious renewal plan to revive the Over-The-Rhine district. The pace of that recovery plan has been remarkable, and many of the heritage buildings in the district have been restored to be modern properties that command high rents.

Located in the heart of Over-the-Rhine, Findlay Market was and is at the vortex of this restoration project, which now includes a free streetcar line that runs for about five km. This connects downtown Cincy to the district with 18 stops, including two stops at the market.

Open Tuesday through Sunday year-round, Findlay Market is home to more than 50 full-time merchants selling meat, fish, poultry, produce, flowers, cheese, deli, ethnic foods and more. On weekends, the Market also hosts a Farmers Market and outdoor market, filling another 50 retail spaces.

Some of those vendors have been long term tenants at the market, with roots stretching back for generations. One of those is Eckerlin Meats, which can trace its founders back to Baden, Germany. When the Findlay Market opened for business in 1852, Eckerlin Meats was there.

Eckerlin is known for making a traditional dish called goetta, a poor man's food made for working-class budgets in its original guise, but now known as a Cincy breakfast favourite. It is made by blending a unique mix of ground pork and beef with onion and pinhead oats, plus an assortment



A MURAL AT THE FINDLAY MARKET



SHOWING OFF THE GOODS AT ECKERLIN MEATS IN THE FINDLAY MARKET.



A DESSERT VENDOR AT THE FINDLAY MARKET



EVEN THE LOBBY IS AN ART EXPERIENCE AT THE 21c MUSEUM HOTEL CINCINNATI.



CINCINNATI'S HISTORIC METROPOLE HOTEL WAS RENOVATED/ REVISED FOR USE BY THE 21c MUSEUM HOTEL