

# True (And New) Blue

DODGER STADIUM'S ADDED AMENITIES PLAY WELL WITH FANS OF THE NATIONAL PASTIME

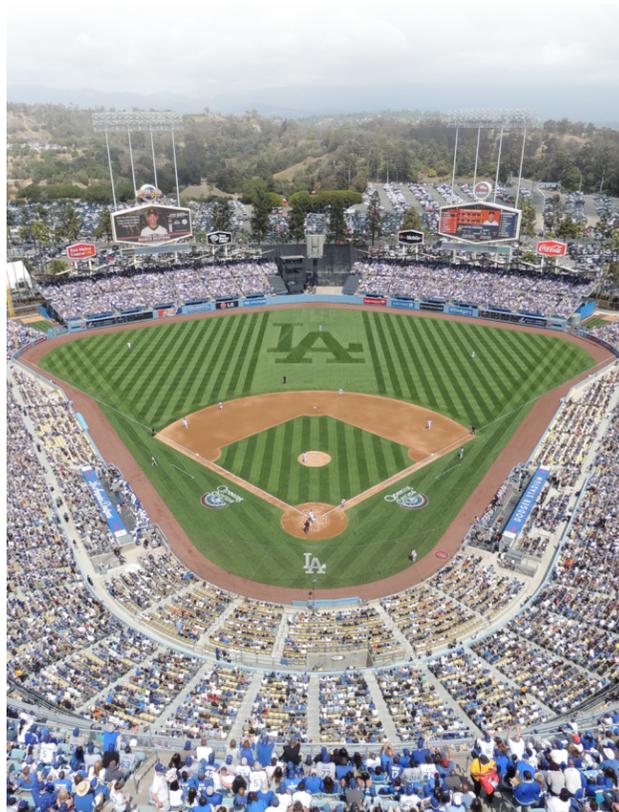
BY DAVID MEDINA AND EVELYN RAMIREZ

It's the bottom of the ninth inning and the home team is down by 10 runs, yet Dodger Stadium is still abuzz with a few thousand cheering on the boys in blue. "We stay until the end," said James Cook, 23. "I love this place, I love this team."

Cook is not alone. Dodger Stadium has offered fans a quintessential Los Angeles experience since 1962. This year, however, the third-oldest ballpark in Major League Baseball got something of a makeover — including remodeled concourse and concession areas, two massive high-definition screens in left- and right-field, changes in parking logistics to facilitate quicker access and tributes to the rich history of the franchise throughout the stadium.

"They have thought of everything," said Alphy Hoffman, a fan of 40 years. "All they need now is to bring back Dollar Dodger Dog nights."

On a recent Monday night, all the rituals of National Pastime were in place. Anticipation was on the faces of all in attendance. Kids waved their gloves in the air; umpires conversed; the National Anthem echoed through the concourses. Moments later, Hall of Fame broadcaster Vin Scully led fans



into the proceedings with his signature sign-on: "It's time for Dodger baseball!"

Back in the seats, fans sized up the opposition; others tried to get a Dodger Dog. And then, "Whap!" The first pitch slapped the catcher's mitt and the game was under way.

During the game, music, jingles and sound effects mingled with the sounds from the field and the stands. In between the innings, fans were entertained with guessing games played on the jumbo screens and with live clips of people throughout the stadium, smiling, jumping and dancing, excited to be on Dodger Vision.

"I really like the new HD quality," said Terry Sandoval, 33. "The [improved] wi-fi is a huge plus, and so are the shorter lines for food."

Fans who don't want to remain in their seats for the whole game have plenty of options. New this year in the concourses are standing areas featuring tables, counters and stools — spots that still offer a good view of the action, and of the picturesque Los Angeles skyline.

Even getting to Dodger Stadium has been made a bit more fan-friendly. For drivers, the general parking price is back to \$10 (from \$15 under the previous ownership), and exiting the lots after the game has been made easier. Or fans can forget about their cars, ride the Metro to Union Station and hop a free Dodgers Express shuttle. From the Red Line station a block away from the Art Institute of California – Hollywood, it's a \$3 round-trip that gets you to your seat in about an hour. On this Monday night, the mass transit option got rave reviews from one woman on the shuttle. "Wow, we got here pretty fast," she said.

The result of the game earned no such plaudits from the Dodger faithful. The Colorado Rockies prevailed, 12-2, but the night at the ballpark still resonated with fans old and new.

"This is our first game, and we love the energy," said a couple who gave their names as Andy and Melanie and had recently moved to L.A. from Detroit. "It's a lot of fun."

For a few extra dollars, fans can even enjoy the game from the Stadium Club, the restaurant/bar located on the club level. There, fans have the choice of viewing the game from the outdoor seating or on the big screen inside at the bar. The Stadium Club offers a full buffet as well, the closest thing to a full dining experience at the park.

And en route to the restaurant, the Stadium Club hallway offers fans a trip through team history — it's decorated with Dodger yearbook covers dating all the way back to the franchise's days in Brooklyn. For fans who want their own piece of memorabilia, a shop full of Dodger gear and baseballs signed by current and past stars is also nearby.

Other amenities are perhaps not as obvious but no less important to fans — for example, the added surveillance cameras and increased security presence to ensure the environment remains family friendly. "We came for a good time," said Karen Vincent, 42, "and I feel a lot safer and more comfortable."

