



# Hockey games offer plenty of entertainment



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**IceRays and Lone Star Brahmas players begin fighting during the Oct. 28 game.**

Picture this: You're watching a hockey game, surrounded by swathes of fans and first-time watchers alike. As the players skate along, the whistle gets blown and a fight breaks out. The crowd frantically cheers on the players as they do-si-do until one plummets to the ice, getting escorted with the help of trainers and medical workers. As the game picks up, one fan shouts, "Hey ref!" The section responds in kind with, "You suck!"

That, along with other aspects, is part of the IceRays fan experience. It's not just watching grown men skate around a rubber cylinder for a few hours and then you go home; there's more to it.

I've seen my fair share of goals when I watch IceRays games, and with them I started to see a few plastic stingrays get lobbed on the ice after the celebrations. Turns out the team sells those little rays for fans to toss when a goal gets scored. Surprisingly enough, this isn't the only time the team encourages people to throw things on the ice.

In between periods, a familiar orange tarp will get rolled out onto the middle of the rink

and, after the count of three, the fans get to throw bouncy orange pucks on to the ice. Here's the catch: the tarp has a target, and the puck that's closest to it gets a small prize. And if one rolls onto the bullseye, you get free burgers for a time. If the orange didn't

give it away, this is the Whataburger Chuck-A-Puck.

There's a desk outside the rink that sells these orange Chuck-A-Pucks at a low price. When the count goes down, you see those pucks fly! Them fans really want a chance at

some free burgers, and it reflects on the ice. It'll be utterly filled with little orange discs and failed fast food dreams when the time is done. It's kind of amusing to see the employees scoop up all the pucks by the time everything is said and done.

But the fun isn't just found in the flinging of purchased goods, there's more to it. The IceRays also have their footing in a sports game tradition: the fan cam. Interspersed throughout the game, the announcer will bring up a certain gimmick for any wayward fans getting caught on the camera to participate in.

There's the obvious Kiss Cam, which gets any couples to have a quick smooch on the JumboTron. They put players from the opposing team on the Kiss Cam once, and I got a real kick out of that.

There's also the Simba Cam, which gets any parents to hold their kids up high a la "The Lion King" while the camera focuses on the little ones' potentially thoughtless expression. Of course, "The Circle of Life" is on full blast as well.

In general, the team puts a bunch of little interactions into one night that, altogether, makes for a great experience that totally goes beyond the idle viewing you may expect when going to a hockey game. There's skating and scoring to be had, that's to be expected, but it's what happens beyond that which makes these times memorable. It's what's kept me hooked for the past decade at least, and it's what'll keep me coming back for more.



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