

News

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## Monday Conversation with Jerry Walker

Volcanoes' co-owner plans changes.

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**KEIZER** — Jerry Walker is not the kind of baseball man who stands pat. As co-owner of the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes, he always is musing about ways to improve the product.

That is why fans who have been attending games at Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer since the franchise arrived before the 1997 season have seen so many changes through the years. From the Homer Porch, Lava Lodge and Kids Play Area to the batting cage, there is something new every season at the ballpark.

Expect more changes in 2004 as the Volcanoes begin their eighth season in Salem-Keizer.

Salem-Keizer, the short-season, Class A, minor-league affiliate of the San Francisco Giants, has won two Northwest League titles — in 1998 and 2001. Last year's team reached the NWL championship series before losing to Spokane.

Twenty former Volcanoes players have played in the major leagues.

**The Volcanoes**, who have averaged about 3,300 fans per game, expect to pass the 1 million mark in attendance this summer. The season opener for the 76-game regular season will be June 18 at Volcanoes Stadium against the Eugene Emeralds.

**Question: The Volcanoes expect to exceed the 1 million mark this summer in total attendance. What are your thoughts about that milestone?**

**Answer:** It's a huge number. Obviously, we're very grateful for the fan support



**Jerry Walker, co-owner of the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes**

**Hometown:** Everett, Wash.

**Age:** 50

**Family:** Wife, Lisa, son, Mickey, 6, daughters Tracey, 25, Brittany, 21

**Favorite baseball player:** Mickey Mantle

**Favorite current player:** Any of our former Volcanoes players that are in the big leagues.

**Most memorable Volcanoes highlight:** When we named the team at the Elsinore Theater. We announced the name of the team with our logos and all of that. It was one of my most memorable times because it so exceeded my expectations. I thought we'd be lucky to have a few dozen people show up, and there was like 600, 700 people there. The entire lobby was packed.

**Hobbies:** Any activities that my son's involved in ... baseball, basketball and soccer.

we've had here, and it's exceeded our expectations. We don't take it for granted. We continue to try to do better at everything we do. How can we enhance every part of the fan experience? That's what we're always concentrating on.

Even though we've far exceeded our attendance expectations, things happen. Look what's happened to the Blazers. You just can't take any situation for granted. You have to really safeguard your operation and the fan experience, and how you take care of the fan in order to stay successful. We've had a great run, but I'm hopeful that the next eight years will be even better.

**Q. When the franchise obtains a title sponsor, Volcanoes Stadium likely will have a new name. Is there any news on that front?**

**A.** Nothing new other than the fact that we still have a marketing arrangement with a firm out of Portland (Events Northwest) to secure a title sponsor for the stadium. Whether or not that is imminent, you just don't know. It's kind of like selling a house, you only need one buyer. You never know when that one is the right fit. We've had some pretty serious inquiries about it. I think we all expect it to happen. Will it happen this season? I doubt it.

**Q. Are there any significant changes planned at Volcanoes Stadium for the 2004 season?**

**A.** In the past we've focused pretty much on the experience of children at the ballpark. This year we plan to add something for adults that we think will be something they enjoy. After the game starts every night we're going to convert our Lava Lodge (a facility down the third base line designed for group events) into a sports-theme type of pub. There's going to be televisions out there where you can watch ESPN, Northwest cable news, Fox Sports. Fans can go out there and watch major league baseball at the same time they're watching the Volcanoes game.

**Q. If the Montreal Expos relocate to Portland, bringing major league baseball to the Rose City, will that adversely affect the Volcanoes?**

**A.** I don't think it's very likely that Portland's going to get (major league) baseball. I didn't think it was a high likelihood before, but I think it's even less now. But I wish they would.

The more and excitement you can have about baseball in a community ... we're just going to benefit from that. Thinking back to the Blazers and their glory days, if we were a farm team for the Blazers, everyone would want to come see the future Blazers. It would be the same thing with baseball in Portland. If you bring a team in there that's popular, we're going to be even more popular than we already are.

**Q. Does that mean the Volcanoes would end their affiliation with the Giants if Portland secured a major league franchise?**

**A.** We'd have to take a look at it. Whether or not we'd do it I don't know. We have such a good relationship with the Giants.

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