

The Sporting Life

When it comes to Boston sports, there's no such thing as a mere spectator.

You can feel the excitement when you walk into venerated Fenway Park and see the 37-foot tall "Green Monster" left field wall for the first time. You can sense it at the Boston Fleet Center, where the rafters are adorned with the numbers of greats: Cam Neely, Bill Russell, Bobby Orr, Robert Parish, Ray Bourque and Larry Bird. You can almost touch it in Copley Square, where hundreds of thousands of people have crossed the world's most famous finish line after running 26 miles and 385 yards into history.

There's no doubt about it. Whether you're on the field or cheering from the sidelines, Boston sports demand you get in on the action - especially if you're a college student.

Students Take a Front Row Seat.

Sure, every time the Bruins hit the ice, the Celtics pound the parquet, the three time championship Patriots charge down the snowy field and the world champion Red Sox prove there is no curse, the stands are filled with college students screaming themselves hoarse-but that's just the beginning. In fact, three of the biggest athletic events in the city (if not the country) are dominated by Boston's students, both as spectators and participants.

There's the Beanpot Hockey Tournament, one of the most famous battles on ice, where teams from Boston College, Harvard, Boston University and Northeastern University square off every February to see who'll walk away with the Beanpot Trophy (yes, it's named after Boston's famous food). And there's the Boston Marathon, the world's oldest and most prestigious marathon, which purposely runs right past Wellesley College, Boston College and Boston University so thousands of cheering students can spur on their colleagues beating the pavement all the way to the finish line in Copley Square. And of course there's the Head of the Charles, the world's largest two-day rowing event, where countless revelers in college sweatshirts crowd the banks of the Charles River in October to watch their favorite teams navigate the three-mile course.

Spectator or Participant: You Choose.

Whatever gets your adrenaline pumping, you'll find it in Boston. Maybe it's sailing around the islands in Boston Harbor. Maybe it's completing the Pan Mass Challenge, a 190-mile bike ride across the state benefiting the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. Maybe it's yelling "GOOAAAL!" in Gillette Stadium when the Major League Soccer Team, the New England Revolution finds net. Maybe it's wrapping yourself in your favorite college colors and packing the college football stadium on a brisk Thanksgiving morning.

Just remember one thing: in this town, sports are not just games. They're a way of life.