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BROCK'S BANTER: Creeping Bluster

By Brock Weir

?You don't deserve it!?
This outburst, yelled by the speaker at the top of her lungs, was not directed at me, but it still sent a shiver down my spine.
The woman, from whom this scream emanated, was sitting two seats to my left.
I couldn't help myself, so I turned around to see just what we were dealing with here, and there she sat with a Cheshire cat grin on her face, subtly looking at her partner ? and to those in her immediate vicinity ? for some sense of approval in between chomps on her hot dog.
Her husband, boyfriend, partner, whoever, was turned in her direction. Whether or not he provided whatever she was craving I can't say, but what I can say is that she didn't get any from me.
At this point you might be asking what inspired this strange explosion of hostility, and I am more than happy to tell you.
?My grandbabies are going to be really impressed by everything you have done this week, but there are going to be really impressed that I saw The Boss,? said Premier Kathleen Wynne after Bruce Springsteen played his first set at Saturday night's closing ceremony of the Invictus Games at the Air Canada Centre.
Bruce Springsteen is, of course, a tough act for anybody to follow, especially a divisive politician, but this was, apparently, the opportunity for the woman in my row near the top of the arena to voice her displeasure.
Yes, apparently the Premier did not deserve to see Bruce Springsteen.
My first reaction was one of disgust, one which I immediately felt the need to register on social media. In expressing said disgust, I posted, ?I don't care what your political stripes are, but if you're one of the (expletive)s booing Kathleen Wynne in the ACC right now you are doing a disservice to the Invictus Games. It is not about her. It is not about you. It's about them.?
I stand by my words, including my online expletive, but, as soon as I posted, my disgust was tempered by a sense of shame.
Facing a chorus of wholly inappropriate boos at a wholly apolitical event is nothing new for big name politicians, even Premiers of Ontario. During Mike Harris' tenure, for instance, he weathered a storm of boos and jeers while addressing a SkyDome full of Ontario students in the presence of Nelson Mandela, then President of South Africa, and his wife Graca Machel, at an event entitled, ?Mandela and the Children.?
I remember this well because, I am sorry to say, that my Grade 7 self was one of the loudest boo-ers in our contingent from Newmarket's Stonehaven Elementary School.
It was a time of frustration for my year. The unions representing our crop of teachers were at continual loggerheads with Queen's Park; we experienced strikes, a revolving door of different prescribed teaching methods, and teachers who were increasingly forthcoming with their own anger at the situation.
This, in no small part, helped fuel the fire but it was certainly no reason to bring politics, particularly politics not fully understood, into a celebratory arena with the world watching. Thankfully, the South African-born teacher leading our particular delegation had the good sense to shut us up, but the horse had already left the barn.
We are living in an increasingly political climate, but we have to make sure that our politics ? and the energy we have to express our respective political leanings, whatever they might be ? are channelled in a productive way.
Sure, people have legitimate gripes with the Liberal government and Kathleen Wynne herself, but she was not there to extol the virtues (or lack thereof) of her government's plan to hike the minimum wage or all the wonderful impacts they have had on your hydro bill. She was there to support the athletes.
She did not bring politics of any sort into the forum. It is simply not the Canadian way.
Unlike some of the leaders south of our border, I simply can't imagine Ms. Wynne, Mr. Brown, or Ms. Horwath ? or Mr. Trudeau, Mr. Scheer, or newly-minted NDP leader Jagmeet Singh ? ever dreaming about coming into an event such as the Invictus Games boasting about the size of their respective caucus.
If they can resist a northward creep of southern bluster, so can we as voters.
Fortunately, the Premier was not outwardly rattled by the cat calls and proceeded to set the correct tone.
?Whether you were in the pool, on the court, on a bike or up in the stands, you felt it,? said the woman who apparently did not deserve to tell her grandchildren she saw Bruce Springsteen, addressing the sea of international athletes. ?Something very special was happening here in Toronto. We all felt it. It has been our privilege to host the third Invictus Games, and to have the opportunity to see exactly what unconquered looks like.

?The road here was not easy for any of you, but you were determined to take it. Maybe you hope that you were going to prove something to yourselves, but in the end, you proved something to all of us. You're helping everyone to better understand not only the sacrifices servicemen and women make for our benefit but also the invincible strength and spirit in each of you and all of us.?
In the end, Prince Harry, founder of the Invictus Games, issued everyone a challenge we would all be wise to heed, whether you want to effect change by volunteering with a community group or helping your candidate of choice sweep in the reforms you want.
?I told you you would be inspired, but I didn't tell you these Games would leave you questioning whether you were living to your own true potential,? said Prince Harry, reflecting on the words he shared at the previous week's opening ceremonies. ?To the thousands who filled the stands this week to the millions who watched at home let me issue you a challenge: don't just move on from these Games with happy memories. Instead, make an Invictus goal for yourselves. Let the examples of service and resilience that you have seen inspire you to take action to improve something, big or small, in your life for your family or for your community. Let's create a ripple effect of the Invictus spirit across our nations that will be the real legacy of this extraordinary week.?