Saturday afternoon Western Michigan and Northern Illinois played in a classic football game that had huge conference championship implications. The game, televised locally on a network channel, was as big as it gets as far as Mid-American Conference football is concerned. Northern Illinois, riding a five-game winning streak traveled to Western Michigan to take on the Broncos in Waldo Stadium. Western needed a win to stay in the MAC West championship hunt.

Watching the opening kickoff, and seeing the far stands at Waldo Stadium as the football flew through the air, the wind came out of my sails.

A game this big with so much on the line, and the stands looked like an afternoon Cleveland Senate League football contest…nothing but metal stands against the white backdrop of painted concrete. If there were more than 200 people in the far stands this writer will eat his well-worn Cincinnati Reds baseball cap.

Broncos fans, you missed a great football game. You missed an incredible show by one of your fifth-year seniors, Jordan White…a player that has fought back from missing two entire seasons with injuries to become one of the best, if not most overlooked, players in the conference. He is

the type of player fans should root for and invest some emotion in; he deserved so much more than just a handful of people in the stands to see him go off with 14 receptions for 180 yards and a touchdown.

The announced attendance at Waldo Stadium was 12,578. That is, in a word, pathetic. Maybe, as the Broncos were driving late in the game looking for the game-tying touchdown, stands full of screaming Broncos fans would have made a difference. Maybe not, but it really couldn't have hurt things. And it would have looked really good on television.

The MAC is big-time college football. There are plenty of players in the conference that will end up playing football on Sunday in the near future. A few years ago you could have watched Joshua Cribbs running the Kent offense at Dix Stadium, and it would not have cost you much money. You could have seen Ben Roethlisberger at the helm of the Miami offense for about a tenth of what it now costs you to see him play for the Pittsburgh Steelers at Heinz Field. Packers great Greg Jennings, one of the top receivers in professional football, made a four-year stop at Waldo Stadium on his way to the NFL.

For my money there is no better deal in sports than Mid-American Conference football and basketball.

I did some research on ticket prices in the MAC, looking at five different schools and seeing what their ticket prices were like. The reader can form their own conclusion as to whether the Mid-American Conference provides bang for their entertainment dollar.

Kent State, a quality MAC football program and the top basketball program the conference has to offer, has its season tickets priced as such: Football – General Admission season ticket - $30; Chair Back Reserved season ticket - $50. These include a parking pass. Single game tickets are $5 for GA and $15 for Chair Back reserved, parking is free. Basketball – Chair Back Reserved season ticket - $240 + $500 donation to athletic club for every two season tickets purchased. Lower Reserved season ticket - $200 + $150 donation for every two seats. Upper Reserved season ticket - $185. Upper General Admission season ticket - $105. Parking for Kent State basketball games is free and the university offers alumni discounts on its season ticket

packages.

The University of Akron has a brand new football stadium, and James A. Rhodes Arena, where the Zips play basketball, is one of the best small college venues in the Midwest. Here are Akron's prices: Football – Priority Reserved season ticket - $250, Reserved season ticket - $120, General Admission season ticket - $90. Akron also offers a family plan with four reserved season tickets for $200. Basketball – Lower Reserved season ticket - $250 + $500 "Z Fund" donation; Upper Reserved season ticket - $185. You can also get a basketball family plan with two youth and two adult general admission season tickets for $210. Akron prices its single-game basketball tickets at $30 for Lower Reserved, $15 for Upper Reserved, $10 for General Admission and $7 for Child General Admission.

Western Michigan just has football ticket information available, and here are the prices: John Gill Club season ticket - $450 plus a donation to the Gary Fund. How much you donate determines if you get a parking pass or not. Chair Back Reserved season tickets - $198 plus Gary Fund donation. Sideline Premium season ticket -$120; Sideline Select season ticket - $66; End Zone season ticket - $66. Single game tickets cost from $15 to $24. I had to chuckle when I read WMU's tailgating policy. First, as far as parking goes, a $500 donation to the Gary Fund with your season ticket purchase will get you a parking pass right next to Waldo Stadium. A $250 donation will get you a parking pass fairly close. As for tailgating, WMU tells you at the top of its tailgating policy to "BYOB." It seems more like a command than a suggestion. Then, at the bottom, it reads "Just remember to think before you drink, because you probably won't be thinking real clearly afterward." God, I miss college.

Northern Illinois, with probably the most rabid fan base of all other schools in the MAC, has reasonable season ticket prices. In fact, they make things quite simple…if you want a season ticket for football it will cost you $85. If you want a good seat you should become a donor to the Huskie Athletic Support Fund and call them to negotiate your premium seat.

Finally I looked at Temple. The Owls do not have season ticket information available at this time, but they do have ticket prices for the final three Temple home games. The three-game package will cost as follows: $126 for Club Level, $81 for Center Sideline, $60 for Corner and $45 for End Zone. Remember, Temple plays at Lincoln Financial Stadium, home of the Philadelphia Eagles, so you can see some games in this top tier stadium for those prices.

Like I have said, Mid-American Conference football (and basketball) is loaded with talented

players. There are also some great rivalries and fun traditions to take part in. Each and every MAC athlete, especially football player, has worked very hard and sacrificed quite a bit to take part in big-time college football. I urge you, students and fans alike, to not only show them you respect their sacrifice and hard work, but to also give them a game-day atmosphere they can be proud of.