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Expanded field seats offer Browns fans 'incomparable' views—for a price

JOE SCALZO

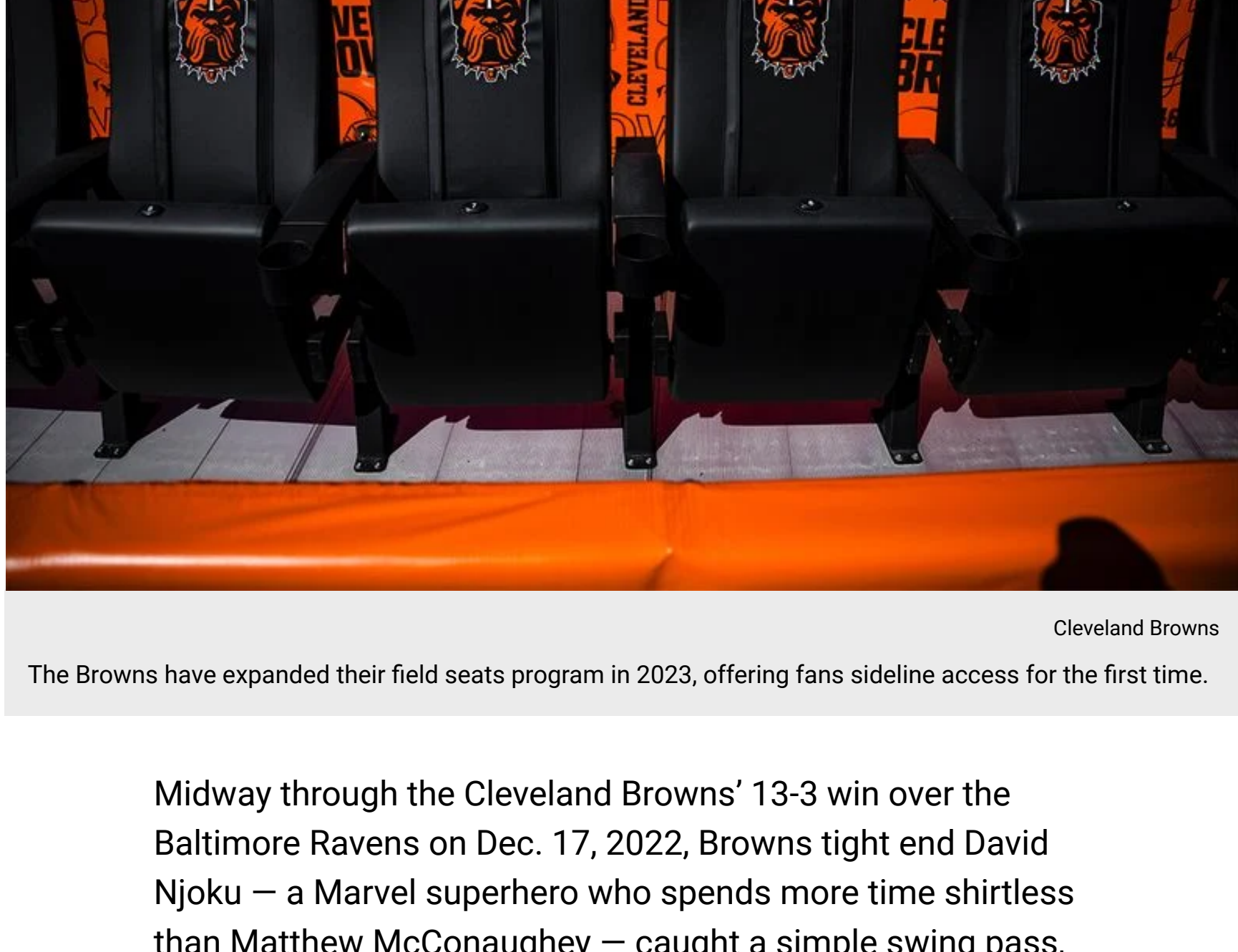
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Cleveland Browns

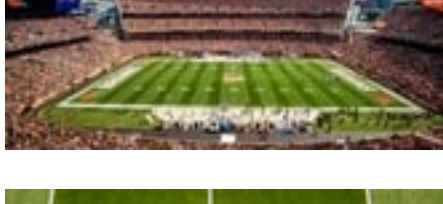
The Browns have expanded their field seats program in 2023, offering fans sideline access for the first time.

Midway through the Cleveland Browns’ 13-3 win over the Baltimore Ravens on Dec. 17, 2022, Browns tight end David Njoku — a Marvel superhero who spends more time shirtless than Matthew McConaughey — caught a simple swing pass, hurdled Ravens Pro Bowl cornerback Marlon Humphrey and landed out of bounds inside the 5-yard line.

Njoku faked a spike, then continued jogging toward a row of field seats near the end zone tunnel, where a Browns fan named Tony D’Amico had two thoughts.

“Either he was going to stop or I was going to take a blow,” D’Amico said, laughing. “He doesn’t look human in person.”

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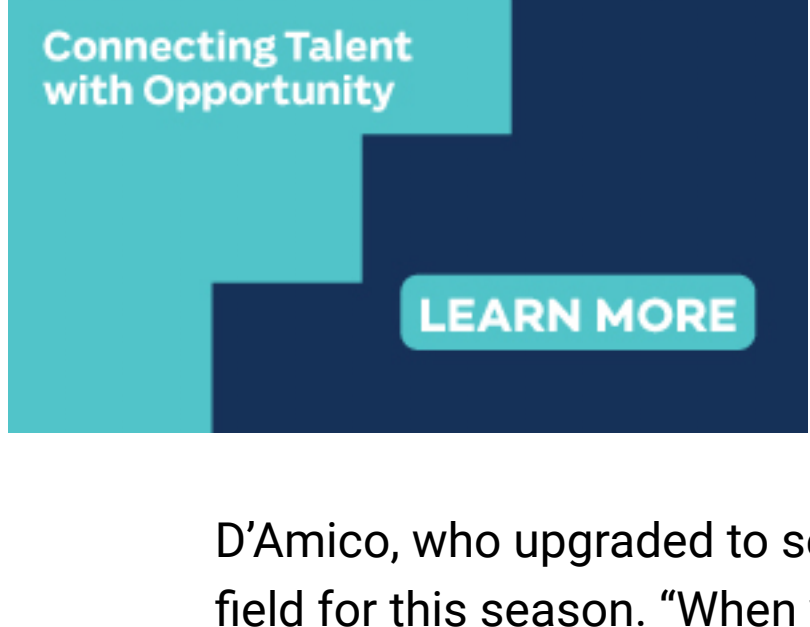


Four ways the Browns boosted fan engagement this offseason



Chris Rose talks Browns preseason broadcasts, Geraci's pizza and why Joe Thomas is so important

D’Amico knows better than most. The founder and managing partner of Fidato Wealth LLC in Middleburg Heights, D’Amico was part of the inaugural group of Browns Field Seat Members, owning four of the 68 available ground-level seats last season.



The Browns have expanded that program this year, offering 460 ground-level seats across the stadium. Those tickets come with VIP parking and access to unlimited food and drink at one of the three premium clubs inside the stadium.

“It’s an unbelievable experience, really,” said

D’Amico, who upgraded to seats closer to the middle of the field for this season. “When you first get there, you pull right into the stadium. They have valet parking. You’re seeing players and ownership walk in. Then you walk to your seats or the club room through an elevator, and you miss the busyness outside the stadium.”

The Browns sold through last year’s field seats allotment in a month, then added 24 more seats on the northeast and northwest sides. Cleveland wasn’t planning to expand the program stadium-wide in 2023, but after seeing the fan response, they pivoted, said Eric Clouse, the chief commercial officer for the Haslam Sports Group.

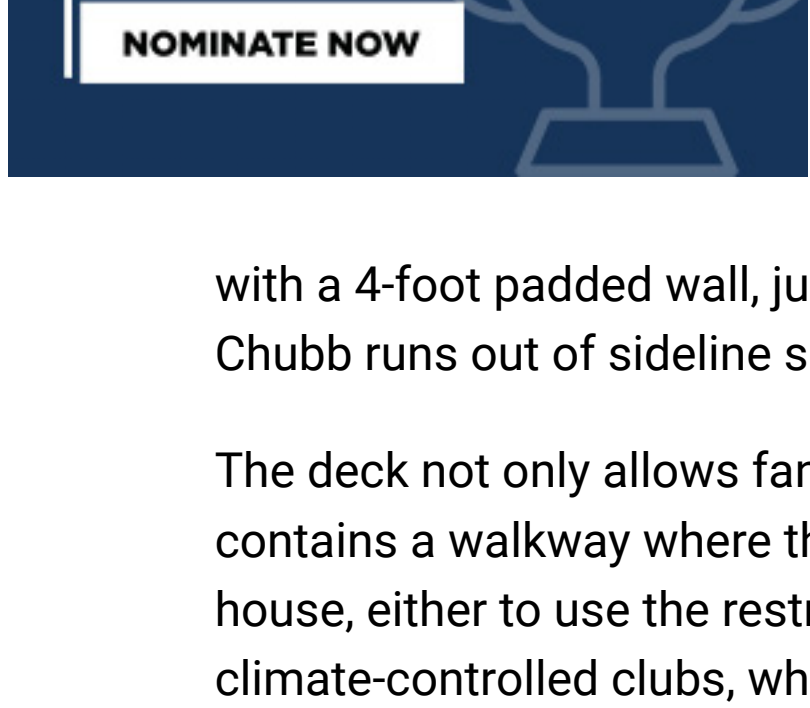
“We started asking, ‘What else can we do? How else can we maximize our space?’” Clouse said.

The biggest question was, if they expanded across the stadium, would fans on the sidelines be able to see the field?

The end zone stadium walls are 6 feet tall, which works fine for those field seats since there aren’t any players standing along the boundary. But 6-foot walls wouldn’t work for the sidelines, where guys like Njoku (6-foot-4, 250 pounds) or right tackle Dawand Jones (6-8, 375) roam.

“There was a little bit of a group fear,” Clouse said. “But those walls actually measured 8 feet. We were like, ‘We can do something here.’”

Other NFL teams offer versions of field seats, particularly if it’s a new or renovated stadium, but they’re usually field-level suites. What makes the Browns’ seats unique is that you don’t have to have a party of 12 to 16 people.



“If you just need two or four seats and you don’t need to entertain at that level, we can still find an opportunity for you,” Clouse said.

The Browns’ leather, padded field seats measure 25 inches across — about four inches wider than the plastic seats in the stands — and are built on a decking system that comes

with a 4-foot padded wall, just in case someone like Nick Chubb runs out of sideline space.

The deck not only allows fans to see the field, but it also contains a walkway where they can access the back of the house, either to use the restroom or visit one of the Browns’ climate-controlled clubs, which come with unlimited food and beverage. Fans on the north or south sides of the stadium have access to the new Servpro Field Club, while the west side fans go to the Draft Room and the east side fans go to the Kardiac Club.

“Their hospitality is unreal,” D’Amico said. “It’s a great experience, a great group of people.”

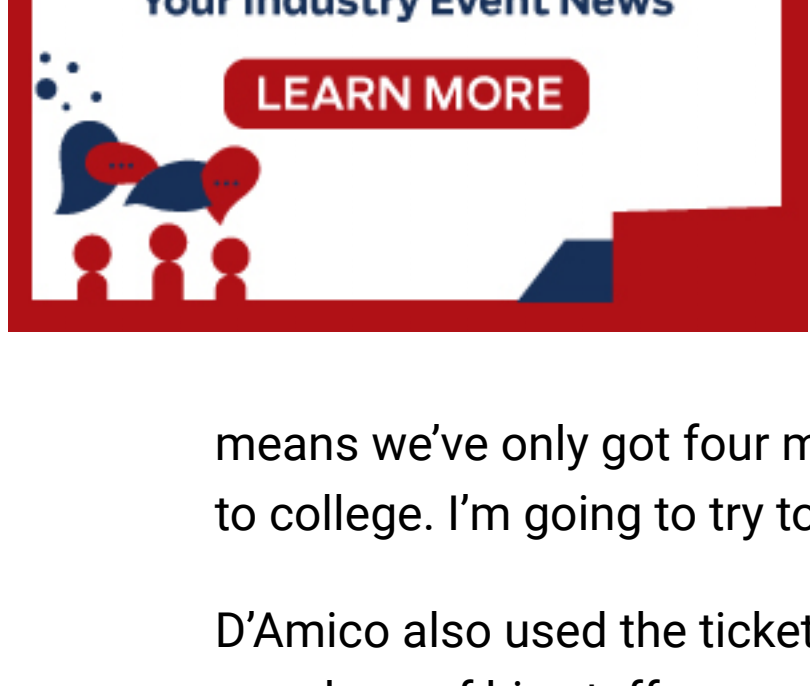


Tony D'Amico

Tony D’Amico, second from left, poses with clients and employees from his field seats during the Cleveland Browns’ 2022 season.

Of course, that access isn’t cheap. To put it in MasterCard terms:

The season ticket price for a prime field seat (i.e., between the 25-yard line): \$15,000.



Field sideline (between the 5 and 25): \$13,500.

Field corner: \$12,500.

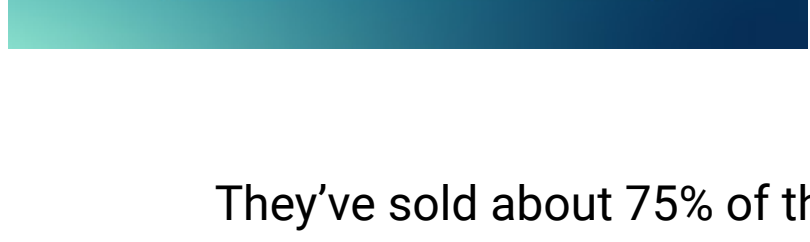
Field endzone: \$10,500.

Making memories with your teenage son: Priceless.

“For my family members, it really is priceless,” D’Amico said. “My son is 14, which

means we’ve only got four more summers before he goes off to college. I’m going to try to make the most of it.”

D’Amico also used the tickets to reward key partners and members of his staff.



“It allows you to take care of people,” he said. “Just to see their enjoyment and to have fun with the people you work with, it’s great.”

The Browns sold through 2023’s season tickets before the first preseason game, but held back about 30 of those seats for single-game ticket sales.

They’ve sold about 75% of those single seats before the season opener and have a waiting list for the season tickets.

“We want people to be able to test it and get a feel for it,” Clouse said. “We know we’re not going to renew at a 100% rate, but we hope we create an experience that’s good enough that most fans will want to come back.”

For D’Amico, renewing was a no-brainer. Like every Browns fan, he’s felt the sky tumbling down.

He’s one of the few to feel the earth move under his feet.



“I had season tickets with the Cavs when LeBron was here and I’ve had tickets to the Guardians, but if you compare that to what I experienced at Browns Stadium, it’s incomparable. You can literally feel the ground shake if a play is coming our way.”



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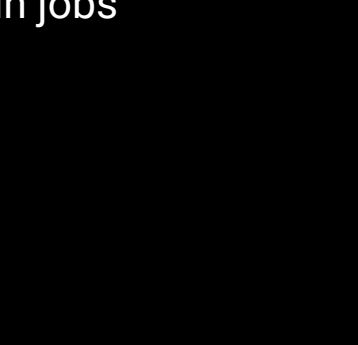
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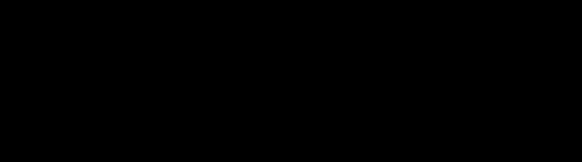
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