

Brewing up a Tribute: Friartown pays homage to local basketball legacy



Union Station is one of those bars/breweries you can always count on to have multiple screens showing the most local possible mainstream sports. So it's not a huge surprise that the brewpub developed what may be RI's first home-grown sports-team themed beer.

Friartown, released in 2023, is an homage to the Providence College teams, particularly basketball. The PC Friars have a better winning streak in recent years than most local fan favorites, and they're authentically RI-based, unlike almost everyone from the Pats to the Celtics to - now - the Paw WooSox. And basketball is a kind of flow-sport, so paying respect through liquid creativity makes sense for an RI-based brewery.

Friartown is described as an old school IPA, another nod to both the college and its long-standing traditions. Union station co-owner **Mike Delehanty** said the idea was inspired by the success of a limited edition collaboration with Shaidzon Brewery called Big Trouble in Little Rhody, made especially for a recent showdown between PC and URI basketball teams. That led to further conversations with PC.

"We have had a really strong response to both beers," says Delehanty, who says the current batch of Friartown is almost sold out, but there will be a second batch in a few weeks. "We've had fans coming in from all over New England, alums from western Mass and New Hampshire who want to try it." It doesn't hurt that the Friars are crushing it this season. "They're on fire. They keep getting better, and I think we do too," Delehanty says. The beer is an old-fashioned IPA with citrus notes, not hazy and very crushable.

Will there be more sports team inspired brews? Smug, another local brewery, had great success with its Tom Brady-inspired Traitoraid. Delehanty is betting on more in the future, but you'll have to tune in to

see exactly how this trend might affect future athletic concoctions.

Union Station boasts the title of first post-prohibition brew pub in RI, but it was long owned by an out-of-state corporation. Shortly before the pandemic, it found itself once again in local hands, and since then the brewery has made a point of embracing local culture and icons, with entries like the Doug White Ale (a white ale, of course), the snow-inspired hazy IPA, Plowed in Pawtucket, the High Neighbor IPA (a friendly poke at nearby mainstream Narragansett Brewery) and their trademark, Cranston Thugs Life, a New England IPA collaboration with local Buttonwoods Brewery. Their Providence Porter honors the Providence Steam Rollers, the local NFL team from the 1920s. "We see most of our creations as love letters to our state," explains Delehanty, who expects to work with more RI celebs - with a **Vinnie Paz** homage already in the works.

The easiest way to find Friartown and other Union Station brews is to go to the brewery, across the street from Kennedy plaza toward the river basin, an easy walk from most anywhere downtown. Growlers and cans are available. But you will also find it at some liquor stores.