A Week in the Life of A Landscape Architect: René Bihan

MONDAY
Project, office, and firm-wide administrative chores eat up the morning. Four meetings—later-office management, marketing, principals’ meeting, and ASLA submittals—I review my own work for Warriors Stadium, the Presidio Trust, the University of Cincinnati, and the Universidad de Monterrey, in Mexico.

TUESDAY
A pleasant design workshop for the Workday Campus with Gensler, then monthly lunch at Lamba Alpha, the honor society for the advancement of land economics to discuss the anti-development measures on the upcoming ballot. Design charrette for a tech campus with SF’s hot WRNS Architects. Final review of the Cincinnati presentation package. Off at 5 to coach for my nine-year-old’s soccer team.

WEDNESDAY
7am flight to Cincinnati. We’re the landscape master planner for the eastern Medical campus and the western campus, an exciting role for the institution’s heavy investment in place-making: A “Trophy Case” for Starchitects, according to The NY Times. We tour the West Campus, noting challenges facing the building programs there, and join the client for a late dinner. A design competition is in the works for a new business school; our position as landscape architect looks good.

THURSDAY
Review the East Campus master plan before Perkins + Will arrive from Chicago. They’re designing a new Health Science Center and we hold our first charrette to site the building. A working lunch followed by a workshop with EHDD on student housing for the West Campus. Decisions need to be made quickly for the planned construction throughout the winter. Off to Houston to meet SWA’s Executive Committee. After dinner I vow not to drink so much next time (again).

FRIDAY
Every two months the Managing Principals review “Old Business.” This basically keeps the firm up and running. At lunch the host office presents their latest, greatest project work to update the EC. “New Business,” firm-wide initiatives to keep us competitive and relevant, follows. 7 pm flight home, cringing as I’ll be back in Houston en route to Mexico on Sunday.

SATURDAY
Marcel’s 9 am soccer match. We’re ranked 3rd heading into the play-offs. An undefeated team beat us badly earlier in the season but we’ve improved. It’s a cold, wet SF morning on the natural turf and I can smell the salt of nearby Ocean Beach. The kids are nervous so I tell a stupid joke and ask them to do their best. A gut-wrenching game ties us at 0-0. Off to Houston en route to Mexico on Sunday.

SUNDAY
10 a.m. flight to Monterrey, barely enough time pick up presentation drawings in the office before leaving for the airport. It’s always hard to leave the family on Sunday without it feeling like a loss. On the other hand, I can’t wait to see the project in Monterrey, now two years in the ground. Sunday winds up as a 1-1 tie for me.