

Will the Changes to Safeco Field, or the Team Be the Hit for the Seattle Mariners in 2013?

Written by Maury Brown
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Size matters... The new video display at Safeco Field is currently the largest in the league, but will it be a distraction over the game?

There were big doings for the Seattle Mariners this off-season, but it wasn't so much in free agency and trades as it was for Safeco Field. As Opening Day commences, the biggest change you see (other than the oddness of seeing the Houston Astros as an American League team), is the fact that a new video display consumes the entire right center-field. This display, now the largest in all of baseball, would take up three-quarters of the outfield. The other less noticeable change are the walls have been pulled in.

In terms of the wall moves, the biggest difference is 17 feet in left-center, from 390 to 378 feet. The deepest part of the field now moves from 409 to 405. And for the most part of the wall moves, the latter shift in of 4' is about the extent of the change.

Another change is the left field in-game scoreboard has been moved up above the wall creating a new small fan viewing area. This builds off what has been exceptionally popular in the centerfield viewing area known simply as "The 'Pen."

But, it's that video board. That massively huge change that has everyone on Opening Day talking before first-pitch. For those that have never been to Safeco Field, the old video board was, well... very 2000. No HD. No massiveness. No hoopla. Tonight, it's "Mariners in HD." This isn't just trimmings for the fans. It instantaneously allows the Mariners additional real estate to display advertisers. And, because it's video, the real estate is not confined to paper and paint, it offers more flexibility as digital marketing. While the Mariners have had this with the ribbon boards that wrap.

The thing that I had wondered was with this massive presence in the right-center, would it be a distraction? Would it become larger than the game? Would the Mariners become an afterthought in favor of "Mariners HD?" The answer is no. In-between innings the board is eye-popping and hard to ignore. During the game, the graphics are a warm green showing game stats with only the bright white of advertising logos jumping out. For 2013, Safeco Field looks as good as ever. The team looks improved. That aspect of the organization is still a work in progress.

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Maury Brown is the Founder and President of the [Business of Sports Network](#) , which includes The Biz of Baseball, The Biz of Football, The Biz of Basketball and The Biz of Hockey. He [writes for Baseball Prospectus](#)

and is a

[contributor to Forbes](#)

.

He

is available as a freelance writer

.

[Brown's full bio is here.](#)

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[contacted here](#)

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