

Marlins Tarp Upper Section of New Ballpark Due to Low Attendance

Written by Maury Brown
Wednesday, 08 May 2013 14:58



Early yesterday, [we reported](#) how in just the second year of a new ballpark, the Miami Marlins were on pace to potentially see the largest attendance drop between first and second year for a new facility. Based on dumping of player payroll after lavishing money in the 2010-11 offseason the Marlins could see a decline of more than 38 percent, which would break the record held by in-state neighbor, the Tampa Bay Rays from 1998 to 1999 ([see the table showing the 23 ballparks opened since 1991](#)).

Now comes word that due to the drop off, the Marlins will be tarping off the upper deck of the ballpark opened just last April. [According to Barry Jackson of The Miami Herald](#) :

The upper bowl will be closed for six dates in the team's nine-game homestand that begins next Tuesday. Fans can sit only in the lower bowl for games May 14-16 against Cincinnati and May 20-22 against Philadelphia. The upper bowl will remain open for May 17-19 games against Arizona.

Marlins representative P.J. Loyello said the team has not decided whether to close the upper bowl for all Monday through Thursday home games, and decisions will be made before each home stand.

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Jackson notes what we were already thinking on this: it means less staff to support the upper bowl, meaning not only are the Marlins seeing lagging attendance, they're about to put some seasonal workers at the ballpark off the clock, meaning the Marlins will save money on staff costs.

The Marlins are not the first to tarp off part of a ballpark due to attendance concerns, but are far and away the earliest at doing so. The Oakland A's do so in their multi-purpose stadium that they share with the Raiders (53,200 capacity for the Raiders, while the A's knocked seating capacity to 34,077 after tarping off 20,878 seats), as have the Tampa Bay Rays (tarping off 5,000 seats in the upper deck of Tropicana Field). The Marlins also did so prior when they were in Sun Life Stadium, sharing the facility with the Dolphins. Clubs do not need clearance from Major League Baseball to artificially constrain seating capacity.

Fire Sale Killing Off Potential Businesses Around Ballpark

In related news, while the idea of ballparks as key economic drivers is something that we've often said is simply not true, the fire sale moves of the Marlins have exacerbated the problem.

[Charles Rabin reports for the Miami Herald](#)

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Now, more than a year since the Marlins first opened the gates to the new Little Havana ballpark — and four years after city and county leaders crowed that building the stadium would be an economic shot in the arm for the area — not a single business is operating in the 8,500 square feet of retail space available in three of the four garages fronting the ballpark.

“Obviously, the Marlins didn't help in regards to their off-season moves,” said Miami Parking Authority Chief Executive Art Noriega, whose semi-autonomous agency manages the garages. “Then everything went ice cold.”

The report goes on to say that chain Marco's Pizza had a letter of intent to sign a lease but when owner Jeffrey Loria conducted the salary dump last year, the business pulled out.

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A week after the November trade, leasing agent Arthur Stevens of Terranova Corp., the firm hired by the city to lure clients to the ballpark, expressed concern about Marco's Pizza making good on its letter of intent to sign a lease.

"Marco's is very concerned about what this will do to future attendance," Stevens, who has since left the firm, wrote to the city's public facilities director, Henry Torre. "Just thought you should know, I'll keep you posted."

Marco's cut and ran.

Two months later, in January, Stevens again expressed concern over a client, this time a national restaurant chain named Firefly.

"While we want to do the deal with the Marlins, their investors are worried about the negative impact that the new Marlins team will have on overall traffic, attendance. One of their investors has contacts within who continues to hear not so good things," Stevens wrote Henry in an email.

A few weeks later, Firefly opted out.

[We know the Marlins](#) like living on welfare, and [there's documents to prove](#) they never were in need of the free ride they got from the taxpayers for the new ballpark to begin with. As to Loria saying the players that were signed and promptly unloaded weren't working out, it makes us ask, [when exactly did the Marlins lose their minds](#) ?



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