

Phillies Feeling Ticket Bounce After Cliff Lee Signing, But How Much?

Written by Maury Brown

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Give it to the Phillies (and their fans) for packing the house. Last season the Phillies drew a total of 3,647,249 to Citizens Bank Park ranking them second to only the New York Yankees. The total comes to an average of 45,027 or 103.5 percent of capacity and averaged 44,453 of 102.2 percent of capacity in 2009 (filling above 100 percent denotes bringing fans into standing-room only).

With the Phillies bringing [Cliff Lee](#) back into the fold ([see the contract details here](#)), some have asked how the club will be able to keep from collapsing under player payroll weight. The Phillies ranked second in average player salary last season, according to the MLBPA's annual report ([see details here](#)). Unless the club sheds considerable payroll, the likelihood is the Phillies will be in the same position next year, possibly worse.

Back to the Lee signing and attendance, it isn't to say that the Phillies aren't benefiting from his signing in terms of ticket sales. [According to a report in the Philadelphia Inquirer](#) the Phillies sold 15,000 tickets on the day Lee made his decision to go back to his former team. Through StubHub, secondary ticket sales for the Phillies after the Lee signing ranked behind New York Knicks games - especially one against LeBron James' Miami Heat - and the Auburn-Oregon BCS Championship game as selling hotter.

But, taking full advantage of the Lee signing, as it might have been with the Rangers, is a matter of limited ticket resources. Season tickets for next season are sold out leaving just six-pack ticket packages and single game tickets left for purchase. The latter won't go on-sale until Feb. 17.

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John Weber, the Phillies' vice president of sales and ticket operations said that on top of season tickets being all gobbled up, before the Lee signing, all suites had been sold for the upcoming 2011 season. "The signing had no impact on long-term leased suites," Weber said.

So, while there is clearly a benefit in bringing Lee in to a "historic rotation", as he put it, in terms of ticket sales it might be marginal compared to how key free agents impact sales (a [good example was when Manny Ramirez came over to the Dodgers](#)). So, Lee's signing value in ticket sales might only be seen in the postseason or in following years, and even that is debatable given how the Phillies have been filling the house in recent years.

And while the signing might not be leveraged as completely as other clubs through ticket sales, it will likely be a part of any discussions when renewing television deals at the local and regional level.

In other words, the Phillies have a bit of a problem, but it's a nice one to have. Most any club would love to say they're in a position where months before the season starts, they have nearly sold out of all their ticket inventory.



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