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Baseball Tickets To "Urban" Stadiums – Does Location Equal Winning?

By Jay Nault

Over the past few years, several new ballparks have been built, and although the main purpose

behind each was to stimulate baseball tickets sales, we were wondering if where these stadiums were built have anything to do with the team's resulting success. No fewer than a dozen new stadiums have opened in recent years, and today we're going to look at where some of these stadiums were built and whether location was a relevant factor in the team's fortunes.

Examples of New "Urban" Stadiums

Of all the ballparks built most recently, almost all of them could be considered "urban." "Urban" for our purposes means a park that was built in the center of the team's city or is at least easily accessible via public transportation and near the bulk of the workforce. Basically, if walk-up traffic to a game is a possibility, we're considering that stadium urban for our purposes.

By unofficial count, 11 new stadiums were built with these parameters in mind. Looking at the teams that play in these new venues, one can deduct that at least seven of these teams experienced a higher degree of success at least partially as a result of their new homes. These teams are: Detroit, the White Sox, the Indians, the Mariners, the Reds, Houston and San Diego. Four of these teams didn't necessarily improve on the field, but didn't get any worse either: Philadelphia, the Cardinals, the Pirates (they've remained terrible) and the Giants.

What does this tell us? First of all, baseball tickets sales soared at every one of these venues, so in that sense the new ballparks were a success. Secondly, teams that were generally good stayed good, such as the Cardinals, and at several teams got better, including the Tigers, White Sox, Indians, Reds and Padres. None of these teams got any worse immediately after they opened their new ballparks. At first glance, it appears that at least on average, it serves a team well to open a park in their city.

Examples of "Suburban" Stadiums

In recent years, only two teams opened ballparks that could be considered "suburban," those teams being the Brewers and the Rangers. We consider a ballpark "suburban" if it requires a drive to the

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game, does not sit near any convenient public transportation and is not situated near a large portion of the workforce.

Although neither of these two teams has gotten any worse, neither has gotten appreciably better either. The Brewers were perennial cellar-dwellers before Miller Park opened, and they haven't seriously threatened for a postseason spot since. The Rangers were consistently mediocre before their new park opened, and that's exactly what they've been since. Once again, it doesn't appear that either team got worse, but neither got instantly better either.

What does this mean?

Looking at the overall trends, we can see some patterns beginning to evolve as these new venues are around long enough to provide sufficient tracking of their teams. Our conclusion is that a new urban ballpark is probably a better idea in general than one in the suburbs, but it's not the defining parameter

towards a team's success.

Urban stadiums provide more of an opportunity for walk-up traffic, which is the way baseball grew in the first place – people heading home from work and deciding to buy a cheap bleacher ticket to have a beer and watch the game. This leads to more revenue and a long-term opportunity for bigger crowds. Just look at Yankee Stadium and Fenway Park as examples. Suburban stadiums enjoy a boost in attendance initially, but after the thrill of seeing a new park wears off, people are generally less inclined to pack the car and make the drive to the game.

Overall, urban stadiums provide additional revenue, and what really determines a team's success is how that revenue is used. The Tigers and White Sox parlayed more money into better teams, while the Pirates did not.

Our conclusion? Management is still what determines a team's success, but these management teams are much more likely to succeed if they know their seats will be filled every night as opposed to wondering how tightly attendance is going to be bound to the team's record. People may stop by a stadium on their way home from work even if the team isn't having a great year, but they won't make a day-long project out of seeing a team that's not winning out in the suburbs.

Basically, urban stadiums, with their ability to sell more baseball tickets on a regular basis, make it easier for good management teams to succeed, which is why the Pirates may actually have a better chance of improving in coming years than the Brewers – the fans will be there with more regularity.

By Jay Nault sponsored by

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Minor League Baseball Is A Great Family Value

By Kadence Buchanan

More families are opting out of the great American pastime of attending major league baseball games than ever before. Some are staying home and watching the games on television, but growing numbers of families are flocking to minor league ballparks. Minor league baseball attendance has grown every year, reaching a record high 39 million during the 2005 season. Major league attendance has continued to decline in many markets.

Although many explanations have been offered by Major League Baseball including changing demographics and competition from other sports and entertainment venues, cost is an undeniable factor in lagging attendance. The average cost for a family of four to attend a major league baseball game in 2005 topped \$170.00 for tickets, refreshments and souvenirs but not including parking. The cost for that same family to attend a minor league baseball game in 2005 was \$80.00, less than half the cost of attending a major league game.

For that price, minor league fans are treated to performances by up-and-coming young stars who may be tomorrow's Barry Bonds or Alex Rodriguez. Minor league baseball follows the same rules as major league, and most minor league teams are associated with a major league team. Because of this association, minor league fans may occasionally be treated to an appearance by a major league star rehabbing from an injury in the minor leagues. Additionally, in some parts of the country, minor league stadiums play host to major league teams during spring training. Thomas J. White stadium in Port St. Lucie, Florida is the home of the Single A St. Lucie Mets during the regular season, but in the spring it's the New York Mets training facility.

Fans often sit right along the baselines with nothing separating them from players but a railing. Players frequently sign autographs before and after the games. Because of the growing popularity of minor league baseball, teams have been able to build increasingly attractive stadiums with amenities that rival their major league counterparts. Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Florida was built with the same architecture and amenities as larger stadiums like Baltimore's Camden Yards and Turner Field in Atlanta but offers fans an intimate experience that is not available at the larger parks.

For more casual fans, minor league teams offer entertainment like performances by local music artists, fireworks and special promotions like disco night or Christian night. Some parks, like Hammons Field in Springfield, Missouri, have children's play areas near the bullpens and on-field activities for children including running the bases, games and contests.

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