

## Marlins' New Home Can be Multipurpose

Samson envisions ballpark as beyond baseball-only

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*This is part of an MLB.com/Marlins.com exclusive series with team president David Samson chronicling the progress and developments of the new retractable-roof stadium that is scheduled to open in 2012. Throughout the series, which will run weekly in the offseason, fans are encouraged to e-mail David at [D.Samson@Marlins.com](mailto:D.Samson@Marlins.com) with their thoughts.*

MIAMI -- Perhaps the Marlins' new ballpark will be more than just a "baseball-only" facility. Marlins president David Samson envisions the stadium may some day play host to football, soccer, concerts, conventions and maybe even the Final Four basketball tournament. Inquiries are being made to see if the 37,000-seat, retractable-roof park could house a number of other events, which would maximize the building year-round.

"We are going to engage in conversations with the architect about putting in a soccer field or a football field, to see if one can fit for special occasions," Samson said. "We're not looking at it for a season, but for perhaps a bowl game. We're looking for configurations for different things."



The college football bowl season just finished, and there are a number of possible games the Marlins' new ballpark may accommodate. Because of its comparatively small capacity, the stadium wouldn't be a candidate for a major bowl game. However, it could be under consideration for an event like the Under Armour All-American Youth Football All-Star Game, which was nationally televised by ESPN on Jan. 2 at Tropicana Field, home of the Tampa Bay Rays.

"We're planning on configurations for concerts," Samson said. "We're looking for configurations for the World Cup. We're looking for configurations for conventions and what's required for that. We're looking for configurations for soccer and maybe even for football. The architect is looking at all of that. But mainly for us, it is a baseball facility. We're looking at possible other uses of it and trying to plan for those uses."

Construction on the Marlins' new home is almost 20 percent completed, and the ballpark remains on schedule and on budget. When it does open, its impact on the community is expected to be year-round. The ballpark being built on the Orange Bowl grounds in the Little Havana section of Miami is being looked at to help revitalize that area of the city.

"The benefit here really is, not only is Major League Baseball here in Miami, but also that whole neighborhood is in need of redevelopment," Samson said. "That's what is happening. People are taking a real interest in the ballpark. People are going to be so excited when the ballpark is there. They're going to realize they can use the plaza every day. They are going to realize there will be bars and restaurants and things going on, on non-gamedays. They are going to realize how easy it is to get around the ballpark. From our standpoint, it's really a positive for Miami and for the Marlins."

Foremost, obviously, the Marlins' new home will be a state-of-the-art baseball stadium that is stabilizing the franchise in South Florida. Since construction began on July 1, 2009, the ballpark is starting to take shape. All developments can be monitored on the new ballpark [webcam](#) on Marlins.com. In the upcoming months, a second camera -- on the south end of the park -- will be installed. Before New Year's Day, Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez and former city of Miami Mayor Manny Diaz toured the stadium grounds and had a chance to talk to workers.

"There's been such a tremendous change," Samson said. "It's a great time to build a ballpark. We're excited about the economy improving, which it is. We feel we hit it perfectly. The most important thing is, the questions surrounding the franchise have been answered. The permanence of the Marlins is here."

In the next month or so, the track beams for the roof will be lifted, which will be another significant milestone. In the meantime, every aspect of the stadium is being discussed.

"The first week or so of the new year, we're really getting down into details of what is going on inside the building," Samson said. "Now, we're getting specific about concession equipment and what kind of concessions are going to be where, in what part of the ballpark. We're looking at specific seats and how wide seats will be in different places inside the ballpark. We're looking at specific viewing angles where each seat will be and what their sightline will be."

Also on the horizon is the opening of a marketing and sales center near the ballpark. That should take place in April.

"That will a chance for people to come and choose their seats and really see the site up close," Samson said.