

New Marlins park set for next milestone

January 29, 2010

Installation of massive roof tracks key to stadium construction

MIAMI -- Some heavy lifting will take place next week in what promises to be yet another milestone moment in the building of the Marlins' new ballpark. In the upcoming days, enormous 10-ton roof tracks will be hoisted atop 150-foot super columns. The retractable roof will eventually open and close along these tracks.

"That is a very, very important day," Marlins president David Samson said of installing the tracks. "There are these 10-ton roof track pieces. They are going to be hydraulically lifted, one inch at a time from the ground, where they've been built. They will be placed on top of those super columns you see on the web cam."

Every stage of construction is available via the Marlins New Ballpark web cam on www.marlin.com.



"Picture tracks -- 150 feet in the air -- that have to withstand the rolling of the roof, and the weight of the roof," Samson said. "Once all the track beams are in place, you'll start seeing roof construction." All the track beams should be in place by the end of June.

"If you're a mechanical engineer, this is a dream, because it is so complicated," Samson said. "There is so much math involved, and physics, in order to calculate the rate that the beams can be lifted, and what is required to lift them is truly a spectacular show of knowhow."

"We've talked on site a lot about the building of the Pyramids in Egypt and how, without any of the modern technology that we have now, they were able to do it. Just to lift track beams on top of columns has taken three months of meetings with the smartest CEOs and engineers in the country. And we smile sometimes at the ability of the Egyptians to build the Pyramids."

The engineering of the roof tracks has been a major undertaking, and Samson noted that the hoisting of the track beams will be videoed so Marlins fans can see this significant development in construction.

"This is a big day for us," Samson said. "These are huge concrete blocks that go on top of the super columns that literally the roof will roll across from the closed to the open positions."

Construction on the Marlins' ballpark began last July, and the project is slightly more than 20-percent completed. The 37,000-seat ballpark is set to open in 2012, the year the club will officially be renamed the Miami Marlins. The stadium is on a 33-month schedule, and the seventh month is just being completed. Piecing together the stadium is a complex project. Steps are being taken to install the roof at a time while construction is well on its way on the east and west sides of the seating bowl.

Why work on the roof beams now?

"Because you're going to start doing the steel of the roof as you're building the rest of the seating bowl," Samson said. "You can't start doing the rest of the seating bowl on the north and south side yet. We've only built the seating bowl on the east and west sides so far. You can't complete the seating bowl until the roof tracks are off the ground. And you can't complete the roof tracks until they are built on the ground."

In the upcoming weeks, a second web cam is scheduled to be installed, providing another view of construction. Fans can also access the new cam on www.marlin.com. Hoisting the roof tracks was just one of the issues discussed this week. A number of meetings were held with Populous, the stadium designer, and they included details on some of the finer points of the ballpark.

"We spent a lot of time going through specifics on the color paint that will go on concrete in different parts of the bowl, and choosing the tile that will be on the floor," Samson said.

The fine detail included the selection of bathroom sinks, and where trash receptacles will be placed.

"It sounds like it's nothing, but you actually have to plan where these things are going to be," Samson said. "So, this week we went over everything from super columns, and roof track beams, to the placements of trash cans."