

Retractable roof key for new stadium

Marlins set new team record in rain delays in 2009

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ATLANTA -- After setting a team record in home rain delays, it's easy to see why the Marlins are ready to put a lid on it.

This season, more than any before, reinforced why the organization was so adamant about its new ballpark having a retractable roof. In all, the Marlins had 21 rain delays at Land Shark Stadium this season, totaling a franchise-record 23 hours, 23 minutes. The previous high in rain delays came in 1999, when the club sat through 16 delays that covered 19 hours, 8 minutes.

"When you talk about ending the season in which we broke the record for all-time rain-delay hours, it makes you realize the need for a roof," team president David Samson said. "That's not even a question anymore." Construction on Florida's new retractable-roof park began on July 1, and the project continues to move along smoothly. Now that the Marlins' home slate has ended, there are 162 more regular-season games scheduled at Land Shark Stadium before the 37,000-seat park at the Orange Bowl opens in 2012.



The Marlins wrapped up their games at Land Shark Stadium on Sunday against the Mets. In all three games, they topped 30,000 in attendance. For the year, Florida drew slightly more than 1.4 million fans in 78 dates. There were three doubleheaders. If not for the rain this season, Samson estimates home crowds could have approached 1.8 million. "People came out the last homestand, which was nice," Samson said. "It makes a big difference. The players feel it. But the rain delays, it really affects their routine a lot when they come in and don't take batting practice. When you have a delay, you don't know if you should eat food or not eat food.

"In Florida, the delay could be 20 minutes or they could be three hours. Those things added up. It makes it tough. The 2012 season is coming soon. It's only two home seasons left." Reflecting on 2009, Samson calls the year one of the "most significant in the history of the franchise." That's because the approval of the new ballpark created franchise stability.

In 2009, commissioners in Miami-Dade County and the city of Miami approved funding for the new stadium. With construction under way, doubts about whether the team would remain in South Florida have now been lifted. Fans can track construction of the new building via the [New Ballpark Webcam](#).

"It's been a season that this whole community will remember," Samson said. "When we promised that after we got the votes that construction would start on July 1, it did. When we promised everything would be on time and on schedule, it is so far. And it's on budget.

"When we said we'd see things on the web cam, you have. When we talked about having a memorable groundbreaking on July 18, it was a day no one should forget." Major steps in construction are well under way. Already, columns have risen from the ground. This week, team officials will be heading to Kansas City to meet with officials from Populous, the stadium designer. Details are being finalized for a variety of topics such as how the bathroom doors will look to which seats will be in the park, and in which sections. In fact, samples of different seats were sent for the team to review.

"This allows us to try different seats that we'll have in different parts of the ballpark," Samson said. "We'd sit in them and choose club seats and suite seats, and seats in the outfield, infield, behind the plate. Those choices were made."