

David Samson and the "End of the World as We Know It"

Written by Maury Brown
Thursday, 12 July 2007 20:00



Once again, just when you think that his mouth is full to the brim with his foot, **David Samson** breaks out the shoehorn and shoves in the other for good measure.

Yesterday, Samson played the part of Michael Stipe and proclaimed that the impending 5-year \$100 million contract extension by the **Seattle Mariners** with **Ichiro Suzuki** would be, "the end of the world as we know it," on Dan Le Batard's radio show.

Unfortunately, he forgot to throw in, "and I feel fine," opting instead to add, that the contract would be "a joke" and "inexcusable."

Samson, the president of the **Florida Marlins** -- a club that has been torn down and built up so many times that they are baseball's version of a roller coaster, a club that recently fired the NL Manager of the Year, a club that had the gall to take one of the best up-and-coming stars in all of baseball, Miguel Cabrera, to salary arbitration -- had the temerity to then accuse the Seattle Mariners of "mismanagement."

You have to give this to Samson, at least he understands the word intuitively.

Kettle, I'd like you to meet Black.

First off, the Mariners didn't set this market. **Jim Hendry** of the **Cubs** gets that dubious distinction when he went and signed

Alfonso Soriano
to a 8-year, \$136 million deal this past off-season.

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This is also about the Mariners understanding what they can afford to do given their high level of revenues.

The Mariners [posted \\$23.3 million in profits last year](#) , according to the club's annual report to the Public Facilities District that oversees Safeco Field stadium operations. So, not only are they pulling in revenues, they're making a profit, and are choosing to keep a player that can only be deemed a star at this point.

Like Junior. Like 'The Bone'. Like Edgar. Ichiro is a key marketing piece for the Mariners. His value on the field, while highly valuable, is augmented further when you look at the soft revenues that he brings to Seattle in the way of tourism. In 2002, Michael Kurtz, director of tourism for Asia and Latin America at the Seattle Convention and Visitors Bureau said that 105,000 to 110,000 Japanese tourists visit the state of Washington annually. Predictions were that after the Ichiro signing, baseball fans would boost the annual count for Japan to 150,000 visitors.

He is more than a \$100 million centerfielder. He's a \$100 million centerfielder that is the face of the Mariners, and for that matter, probably Seattle.

Samson seemed to also miss that this is about competing in your own division, to a certain extent. He needs to worry about what the Phillies or Nationals are doing, as they are the ones the Marlins go toe-to-toe with the most often.

Lastly, my personal experience simply says that Samson doesn't get it. On what many deemed the "Marlins Relocation Tour - 2002," I spoke to Samson while he was in Portland. In fairness to the Marlins, I told him that I understood why the total team payroll would have to be reduced, given how Jeffery Loria had overspent prior in the hopes of recouping the lost revenues via a shiny new stadium that has yet to transpire. Samson replied, "You know what? I'd tear it all back down again, if it meant getting back to a World Series."

It was a shock to hear; a sign of shortsightedness. That herky-jerky style will do nothing more than give your fans whiplash. It's too emotionally draining. Who wants to make that kind of emotional investment year in and year out? Not many.

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Lastly, Samson doesn't strike many as being the most tactful executive. Rumor was that MLB got directly involved in negotiations and set the Marlins officials on the sidelines, when he caused friction during negotiations with local and state government officials over the stadium funding effort.

When we spoke that rainy evening in 2006, Samson mocked a certain team that is now in contention, but for years was an example of futility.

"Can you believe those <expletive> guys? Celebrating mediocrity. Throwing the doors open for reaching .500?" he said shaking his head.

Samson seemed to miss the point.

That club -- now one of the darlings of MLB -- was reaching out to their fans and building bridges in the community, which then creates longterm fans. His failure to understand this fundamental aspect of sports ownership is what is really "a joke" and "inexcusable."

Somewhere, Bud Selig is shaking his head and cracking open a bottle of Pepto after hearing of all of this, knowing that Samson is liable to do something "professional" like this again.

(Read [The Biz of Baseball interview with David Samson](#))

Maury Brown is the founder and president of [The Business of Sports Network](#) , which includes

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,
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[The Biz of Hockey](#)

. He is a contributor to

[Baseball Prospectus](#)

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and can be contacted

[here](#)

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