

Why Are Postseason MLB Games Called a Sellout When They're Not at Capacity?

Written by Maury Brown

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Attendance watching for MLB's postseason can be an interesting affair. During the regular season, fans might hold their nose when an announced *paid attendance* figure is clearly higher than the number of clicks through the turnstiles. More than one has mentioned a sea of empty seats at many a Marlins game, only to see paid attendance figures – the number of tickets sold – fly in the face of the reality of actual people at a game.

But, when it comes to the postseason, the interest in attendance figures perk up. After all, if you can't sell out a playoff game, it must say that fans don't care, right? With the Rays winning the AL East and playing in the ALDS, there was a lot of questions about fan interest in the Tampa Bay area.

But, attendance figures are a lot harder to gauge in the postseason, for several reasons. Maybe last night's ALCS Game 4 is a good example.

The announced attendance at Yankee Stadium last night was 49,977 and deemed a sellout. But, if you look at the seating capacity for Yankee Stadium ([see seating capacities for all 30 clubs](#)) it's listed at 52,325, a difference of 2,348.

What's up?

The distance seems exceptionally large, but there is an explanation for some, if not all of the difference.

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[MLB's By-Laws](#) breaks down all the comps that go with the World Series. We're assuming that, much as is the case with the Fall Classic, the LCS is much the same.

Here's how the league deals with all those players, execs, VIPs, etc that want tickets to postseason games:

TICKET PRIORITIES. *The order in which requests for reserved seat tickets for the World Series shall be filed is as follows:*

(1) Visiting Club. *Five hundred reserved seat tickets for each game to the visiting club, for accommodations of its officials and guests, the same to be paid for by the visiting Club.*

(2) Players. *Five tickets for each eligible player of the visiting team, which shall be delivered to and paid for by each player through the business manager of the player's Club.*

(3) Commissioner's Office and Club Officials. *Requests filed by the Commissioner's Office and Major League Club officials or parties of prominence with the Commissioner.*

(4) Major League Clubs. *Major League Clubs (other than the visiting Club), 100 reserved seat tickets, 16 of which shall be box seats. Eight of the 16 box seats shall be grouped together in the lower deck between first and third base, and 20 of the remaining 84 reserved seats shall be so situated.*

So, when you start adding up all these comps that chew up paid attendance, you're talking a sizeable number. But, is it in the thousands? Likely, no. But then, there's something else in the mix.

With postseason play, media interest skyrockets. A roomy pressbox isn't able to handle the

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crush of media that descends on a stadium for a given game. To deal with the onslaught, the club will build temporary pressbox overflow where there is customarily paid seating. Hundreds of seats can be chewed up just for media.

We're still not sure about whether over 2,300 in paid attendance for Game 4 of the ALCS was chewed up with the tickets and absorbed seating we've outlined. The Yankees said so, so you have to believe that's the case. Simply remember that when looking at a sellout... it's a sellout that might not be a sellout... If that makes any sense.



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