Marlins owner, Jeffery Loria

There are some articles where you just don't know where to begin. The roots of this one stretch back to the Montreal Expos, touch on the Baltimore Orioles (he nearly owned them), and have their roots in ripping people off. I'm talking about Jeffery Loria, along with David Samson, and the Miami Marlins. They aren't a dumb lot, these guys. They have been able to get a ballpark built on the public's dime that will wind up when it's all said and done with interest costing $2.4 billion. And, when season ticket money rolled in, they spent it like they meant it. Yes, it was as if they were a drunk sitting a slot machine, simply plugging money into the free agency machine, but then, that plays into the master plan. At the Winter Meetings, **Jose Reyes** , **Mark Buehrle** , **Heath Bell** , was signed and it seemed any high-powered FA with a pulse, was being courted. After all, they can always fall back and say that they "tried."

I said it then, and I'll say it now, when you throw all your chips in and let the free agency market dictate your decision making process, you've already failed. But then, it all backfired and in the midst of the Marlins losing, they're going to be coming out ahead while the fans are made to look like chumps.

Yes, Max Bialystock in *The Producers* may have best summed up the Marlins best when he said, “How did it begin? He walked into my office with his cockamamy scheme! You can make more money with a flop than with a hit!”

So, the Marlins, who saw the lowest attended new ballpark opening in the past 12 years , decided that cutting costs will ultimately give them more money, which I’m sure was the plan all along, right?

"The reality is, if you don't have a competitive team, the big stadium that's built publicly and privately becomes another disaster," Samson said in 2008 .

Well, glad to see you pushed that whole disaster thing forward on Tuesday.

Yes, while the Marlins took on more than $200 million in total player payroll less than a year ago at the Baseball Winter Meetings, they ended the season moving **Anibal Sanchez** , **Omar Infante**
(Tigers), and
Hanley Ramirez
(Dodgers). On Tuesday evening they made that look like child’s play by moving Jose Reyes (2013:$10M, 2014:$16M, 2015:$22M, 2016:$22M, 2017:$22M, 2018:$22M club option - $4M buyout),
Josh Johnson
(2013:$13.75M),
Mark Buehrle
(2013:$11M, 2014:$18M, 2015:$19M, plus a $4M deferred signing bonus),
John Buck
(2013:$6M), and
Emilio Bonifacio
who is arbitration eligible this year and (get this) $4 million in cash to the Blue Jays for
Yunel Escobar
,
Henderson Alvarez
,
Adeiny Hechavarria
,
Jeff Mathis
, minor league pitchers
Justin Nicolino

and Anthony Desclafani and minor league outfielder
Jake Marisnick
. All told, the Marlins stripped $163.75 million off the books and that doesn't include the option year or buyout on for Reyes, plus what Bonifacio will get in salary arbitration this year.

"The reality is, if you don't have a competitive team, the big stadium that's built publicly and privately becomes another disaster." Well, you said it, David.

Except, that's not the talk out of Miami on this day. Nope, it's all going as planned.

"This should be a positive change," said Larry Beinfest. "After a disappointing 2012 this gives us clarity as we begin our offseason roster improvement."

Clarity. That's rich.

So, you have to ask yourself when was "lack of clarity" fully consumed in the Marlins front office? Was it when they spent foolishly at the Winter Meetings in Dallas last December, or was it Tuesday night when they went with (another) fire sale?

Because, here's the thing: the Marlins are still collecting revenue-sharing. The Marlins are no longer having to split revenues with the Dolphins when they were at Sun Life Stadium. The Marlins, while seeing poor attendance for a new stadium, still saw the largest attendance increase of all 30 clubs last season. And finally, the Marlins are enjoying all that sweet suite money they didn't have before.

Maybe "clarity" works like this for the Marlins:

"Hmm…. You know, we just found out what it's like to spend like other clubs that are competitive, and we're not making as much as we did. Maybe we should rethink that. The Red Sox just dumped a ton of money on the Dodgers, and the Astros have been stripping payroll to

the core. We can use those two as cover."

Or, there's another thought. One that could be far crazier than what's happened in less than a year with the Marlins… **Josh Hamilton** (or worse), **Alex Rodriguez** . Yes, the Marlins could to take that freed-up that money that didn't work, and use it to be flashy again. That way the Marlins could be the flavor of the week at the Winter Meetings again.

And, if somewhere in the back of your head, you're thinking Loria is stripping the player payroll down so he can sell, think again. While Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami weren't exactly the smartest with the deal (OK, it's one of – if not the – worst stadium deals for the public in history), they did get a "Non-Relocation Agreement" in the mix (see here, in PDF) in which if a controlling interest is sold (more than 50 percent) over the early life of the ballpark, the earlier that controlling interest is sold, the higher percentage of that sale goes to the two. See below:

- The provision becomes effective concurrent with the Stadium Agreements and would last ten (10) years, or, six years after the stadium is constructed. The payout period has been extended from 5 to 10 years, and, the percentage payout has been increased as shown below.

If the sale occurs in:	BSA Plan	Jan. 09 Plan	Current Plan
Year 1	10.0%	18.0%	70.0%
Year 2	9.0%	16.2%	60.0%
Year 3	7.0%	14.4%	50.0%
Year 4	6.0%	12.6%	30.0%
Year 5	5.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Year 6	0.0%	7.5%	7.5%
Year 7	0.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Year 8	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%
Year 9	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%
Year 10	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%

A possible sale would be speculation but what is known is this: the Marlins aren't exactly being held up as the poster child for how a good MLB club should be run. Here's a small sample via Twitter:

- So Jeffrey Loria threw himself a cheap wedding, collected a ton of gifts, then got the marriage annulled the next day. Got it. – Molly Knight, *ESPN the Magazine*

- Another consideration for MLB as it reviews this trade: the Marlins will be held up as cautionary tale for cities asked to build ballparks. – Buster Olney, *ESPN*
- Last year at winter meetings the marlins felt like it was a mirage and this proves it was..is the ballpark still there? – Karl Ravich, *ESPN*
- Decency would require Marlins to slash ticket prices for the public that helped fund new ballpark for "major league" team, no? – Bill Shaikin, *LA Times*
- McCourt did well to sell #Dodgers, but too bad he didn't hold out & put Selig on the witness stand. Double standard w Loria is fascinating. – Bill Shaikin, *LA Times*
- Loria vs. City of Miami. Cage Match. Hacksaw **Jim Duggan** Special Guest Referee. Book it Vince. #MLB meets #WWE #Marlins #OrganizationOfHeels – Casey Stern, *MLB Network Radio*

- Huh? - Rickey Nolasco*, Marlins starting pitcher*
- Alright, I'm pissed off!!! Plain & Simple - Giancarlo "Mike" Stanton, *outfielder for the Marlins*

So, the Marlins have lost their marbles... if they ever had them to begin with in the Loria tenure.

Maury Brown is the Founder and President of the Business of Sports Network , which includes The Biz of Baseball, The Biz of Football, The Biz of Basketball and The Biz of Hockey. He writes for Baseball Prospectus
and is a
contributor to Forbes
.
He
is available as a freelance writer
.
Brown's full bio is here.
He looks forward to your comments via email and can be
contacted through the Business of Sports Network (select his name in the dropdown provided)
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