

## Review: Roku, MLB.TV Premium Combination a Home Run

Written by Maury Brown  
Tuesday, 25 August 2009 03:06

---



**The Roku player coupled with MLB.TV Premium combines near broadcast quality with a reasonable cost, a simplistic design, and placement flexibility that make it a great baseball viewing option.**

**UPDATE:** See David Pinto's [review of the Roku player on Baseball Musings](#)

---

For those that follow MLB daily, the mind often drifts into the crossroads of which rich media platform is being considered for purchase, or renewal. Whether it has been MLB Extra Innings, baseball's out-of-market television package, Gameday audio, XM/Sirius Radio, or MLB.TV for your computer, and now your iPhone or iPod Touch through the At Bat 2009 application, options have been plenty.

## Review: Roku, MLB.TV Premium Combination a Home Run

Written by Maury Brown  
Tuesday, 25 August 2009 03:06

---

For those looking to *watch* games, it's been a question of subscribing to MLB Extra Innings or MLB.TV – television vs. your computer.

Now, the choice may be MLB Extra Innings or MLB.TV not only for the computer, but for your television as a device has come on the scene that moves streaming internet video from small to big screen at the house.



### Roku Player Proves Less is More

As home entertainment devices go, the Roku player personifies simplicity. The \$99.00 box is small in size, just slightly bigger than your hand, has no controls on the box to speak of, and has nothing but the assorted connection jacks for your television – composite, S-video, and component video outputs, stereo and optical audio outputs and an HDMI integrated audio / video connection – on the back. All navigation occurs with an ultra simple remote control

The device can be connected to the internet via standard ethernet cable or, as we did for this review, using Wi-Fi.

### Setup a Snap

Connecting and configuring the Roku player took no more than 10 min. and that was with security settings for our Wi-Fi hub set tight. Booting up the device walks the user through the setup process, beginning with “wired” or “wireless” configurations.

## Review: Roku, MLB.TV Premium Combination a Home Run

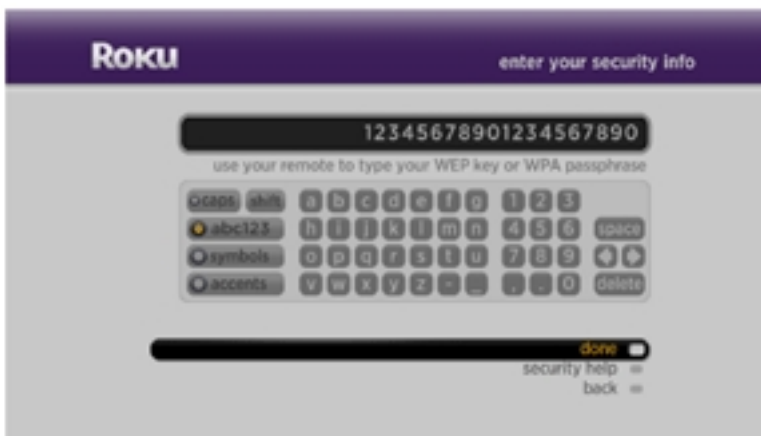
Written by Maury Brown

Tuesday, 25 August 2009 03:06

---

Selecting the wireless setup, the device scans for available wireless clouds in range where the user simply scrolls forward or backward through the available wireless networks to choose from.

Once selected, the device prompts for the wireless hub's WEP key. If, as we did, have the hub set to only certain MAC addresses, the Roku player automatically detects that the connection to the web is not yet made, and displays the MAC address for the device.



**Security a snap. Enter your wireless hub's WEP key with Roku's remote**

### MLB.TV Premium via Roku

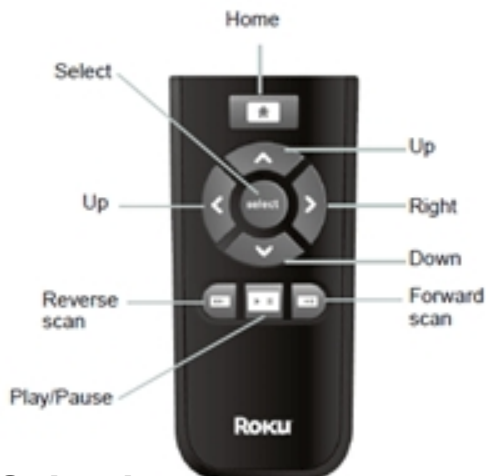
Once the device is configured and connected to the web, the user can then select the MLB.TV Premium service. Selecting it brings up a code that the user then enters from a special page on MLB.com (see [www.mlb.com/roku](http://www.mlb.com/roku)). Here, MLB.com requests a credit card number for, what they claim is, location purposes for blackouts, which comes across a bit heavy handed in order to lock down the subscriber's location. Moving past the credit card page, the user enters the code, and within seconds, the Roku player validates the MLB.TV Premium subscription.

## Review: Roku, MLB.TV Premium Combination a Home Run

Written by Maury Brown

Tuesday, 25 August 2009 03:06

---



### Selecting Games

Much as the Roku player is physically designed for simplicity, its interface for games is much the same. Using the simple controls of the device's remote, the user is no more than 3 clicks away from a game. Initially, the current day's games come up, with the user simply scrolling back and forth through the selections. Depending on whether the game is already in progress, the user can select to start at the beginning of the game, or live. You can scroll back through the archive of games from days prior, or see details of the upcoming game schedule in future dates on the calendar.

### Quality Near Broadcast

We were skeptical of the picture quality that the Roku device would display with visions of buffering issues and heavy dithering being part of the experience given that we had seen as much when attempting to get to the highest quality picture when testing MLB.TV Premium on our Dell Inspiron laptop. Those fears were calmed from the moment we started viewing content.

While the picture had some slight dithering on our standard def set, the quality far surpassed expectations. The player detects Internet bandwidth and makes on-the-fly adjustments to provide the highest quality picture and audio possible – up to 720p, so those with more bandwidth such as a dedicated T1 connection should see even better quality than we did using wireless, which was very good. If one were stuck with making a decision on MLB Extra Innings or MLB.TV Premium with a Roku player, consider price: A first time MLB Extra Innings subscription for the entire season was \$191.00. The cost of a MLB.TV Premium subscription, plus the Roku player for the entire season is around \$200. As you'll see, there are added product perks to the Roku/MLB.TV Premium route that could lure you into possibly passing on MLB Extra Innings.

### Wireless + Size = Placement Flexibility

## Review: Roku, MLB.TV Premium Combination a Home Run

Written by Maury Brown

Tuesday, 25 August 2009 03:06

---

One great selling point from our perspective was the wireless capability coupled with the device's small size. Have a room that isn't plumbed for cable or satellite? Using the Roku player gets around the hassle. Want to take in a game down the street with your buddy that doesn't have MLB.TV or MLB Extra Innings? Put the device in your backpack and hook it up at their place. In other words, Roku's placement options make it a great affordable gadget when a laptop won't due.

### MLB.TV Premium As A Gateway

MLB Advanced Media has been extremely savvy on the vertical product approach with MLB.TV Premium. Before, the product was a "computer only" offering, where now it's a gateway subscription into several platforms, including the Roku player, Boxee's player, and At Bat 2009 for iPhone and iPod Touch. Now, the video streaming subscription service has multiple applications making it exceptionally enticing for someone looking to gain access across multiple device platforms as opposed to just television via MLB Extra Innings.

### The Future

As MLB.TV Premium continues to penetrate platforms and grow, the streaming service needs to address at least one major shortcoming: dealing with commercial breaks. Now, instead of seeing local commercials, the user gets a splash screens simply saying , "MLB.TV Commercial Break" with no audio.

When viewing on computer, this was annoying, but seemed to come with the online landscape where progress bars for downloads and video buffering have been the norm. On television, the dead air is completely out of place when one is used to broadcast television. MLBAM should see that there is a clear space to place ads, yet another revenue stream to tap.

### If You Love Roku, Might You Pass on MLB Extra Innings?

We loved the Roku player given the quality of the picture, ease of setup, and the fact that MLB.TV Premium is the service for its content. Since The Biz of Baseball is bouncing between watching games on laptop and iPhone -- all of which use MLB.TV Premium, the \$99.00 price tag for the device will make renewing our MLB Extra Innings subscription a tough decision.

For more information on the Roku player with MLB.TV Premium, see <http://www.roku.com/mlb-partner>

## Review: Roku, MLB.TV Premium Combination a Home Run

Written by Maury Brown

Tuesday, 25 August 2009 03:06

---



**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 is available for hire or freelance

.  
[Brown's full bio is here.](#)

He looks forward to your comments via email and can be [contacted through the Business of Sports Network \(select his name in the dropdown provided\)](#)

.

***Don't forget to register and log in on The Biz of Baseball site to get updates via your in-box, and see information only logged in members can see.***

[Follow Maury Brown on Twitter](#) 

[Follow The Biz of Baseball on Twitter](#) 