

Concessions on concessions **Fans say they will spend less at games !**

By Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel

With the recession at full power, Milwaukee Brewers fans interviewed Friday at the home opener say they probably will attend the same number of games this season but will hold back on spending when it comes to food, drinks and other merchandise at Miller Park.

Major League Baseball is anxious to see how much of an impact the recession will have on the \$6.5 billion industry. Commissioner Bud Selig has created a Commissioner's Fan Initiative, which is designed to publicize the ticket and event promotions offered by each of the sport's 30 clubs.

Judging from interviews with fans attending the home opener Friday, fans have little desire to cut back on the number of games they attend but will watch their wallets and purses once they're inside the ballpark.

Dave Williams of Wauwatosa was standing in the right field concourse with his wife, Mindy, and their 1-year-old son, Brayden, when rightfielder Corey Hart hit his first home run of the season. As the crowd shrieked in delight, Williams said he and his family tried to get to five games a year. Asked if he planned to cut back on attending games, he said, "Hopefully not."

"I sell office furniture, and I know everybody is holding on tight," he said.

Although he plans to try to see the same number of games, he and his family will cut back on concessions. Like many others, they plan on taking advantage of the Miller Park lots before the game, where they can bring their own food and drink.

Stacy Wickershiem and her husband, Jamie, of Appleton, bought \$22 standing-room-only tickets for Friday. Normally, they make the drive from Appleton to Milwaukee four or five times a year to see a game with their two children.

"We ate before we came in," Stacy Wickershiem said.

The Brewers and Sportservice are not standing pat. The new concession prices for this season freeze costs on many items at the stand, raise prices on food and beverages sold by vendors and offer special value meals for kids and families.



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And on Monday through Thursday games, a new discount concession stand will be open for business at the stadium's Terrace Level. At that stand, fans can buy a smaller-size hot dog, soft drink and bag of peanuts for \$3.

On Friday, the lines were long at many of the concession stands. Although there was a brisk tailgating experience going on before the game, it seemed plenty of fans also spent money at the concession stand.

The Brewers are already doing well selling tickets with more than 1.75 million tickets sold to date. But the club is offering one or more ticket promotions for 55 of the season's 81 home games.

Gary Hoeft of Oak Creek was sipping a beer on the right-field concourse and said he usually tried to come to 10 games a year.

"I'll keep on coming, but most likely I'll be doing my eating and drinking in the parking lot," he said. "You know, peanuts and beer before I come in."

That's the same plan friends Bill Zitzke of Milton and Dennis Nyman of Waukesha have in mind this season. Both will come to Miller Park three or four times a year, and that won't change.

"But I could see bringing a few more beers from home rather than paying for them," Nyman said.

Both the Brewers and Major League Baseball say they will find ways to keep the fans coming to the park and spending at the park. In May, Major League Baseball is expected to announce that it will offer details on 10%-15% discounts on family days for participating clubs.

