

# The Washington Times

## ***New Nats owners plan 'reopening'***

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THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Published July 11, 2006

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The Nationals yesterday announced details of the "grand reopening" of RFK Stadium for the weekend of July 21, including a series of new food options and entertainment around the stadium, and promised to lower ticket prices for many upper deck seats.

Fans attending the weekend series against the Chicago Cubs will see aesthetic changes near the main entrance to RFK, including new landscaping, light pole banners and signage. The team also will organize a "Fan Fest" on the nearby Armory Mall with interactive games and other activities.

Inside the ballpark, fans will hear new music during the game and see minor upgrades to scoreboards and the audio system.

Meanwhile, the team will lower prices on 1,000 seats normally priced at \$11 to \$5, and the price of 1,000 \$7 seats will drop to \$3. The decreases will go into effect June 25.

The changes are part of an effort by the Nationals' new ownership group to introduce itself to the city and come at a time when attendance is down about 20 percent from last season. The family of real estate developer Ted Lerner and incoming team president Stan Kasten will greet fans all weekend and collect suggestions on how to improve the fan experience even further at RFK and the team's new ballpark, which is scheduled to open in 2008.

"We were always going to try to knock ourselves out with fan experience," Kasten said. "We're not going to wait for the new ballpark. We're not going to take anything for granted."

Already, however, the new owners are tackling the issue of concessions, which have long been a complaint among fans. The terrace level of the stadium between the 300 and 400 levels will hold a new food court, and Kasten said he has been working with concession provider Aramark to offer new menu items, including cheesesteaks, bockwurst, bratwurst and several new styles of hot dogs. Less expensive "value meals" featuring a hot dog, chips and drink for \$7.50 also will be sold. Meanwhile, the team has hired Philadelphia-based customer service consultant LRA Worldwide to give clinics and special training to stadium staff.

The Lerner family and Kasten were awarded the Nationals in May. It is still unclear whether the new group will have official control of the team by the grand reopening, but Kasten said he expects the sale to close within the next two weeks.

*Got a question about the Nats? Mark Zuckerman has the answers. To submit a question, go to the [Sports Page](#)*