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Giving You the Score, Plus a Whole Lot More Big Board Will Be a Hit, Team Says

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The massive new scoreboard at [Nationals Park](#) is like a high-definition TV on steroids. And although that might not be the best word to associate with baseball these days, there is no getting around the size of this monster.

Set for its first public viewing today, the screen is the equivalent of a 1,300-inch television -- more than five times as large as the scoreboard at [Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium](#). Other than the game on the field itself, it will be the centerpiece of the fan experience at the 41,000-seat ballpark.

Live action, instant replay, images, graphics, statistics -- all there. And the programming is brand new, so the high-tech features will have the same freshness as the \$611 million stadium, where the [Washington Nationals](#) will host their regular-season opener March 30 against the [Atlanta Braves](#).

"You've got a lot of graphics associated with the inaugural season, Nationals Park, the start of a new era," said Chris Mascatello, executive vice president of technology sales and services at ANC Sports, a digital signage company that is working with the team. "Stars and stripes have a very prominent theme."

The Nationals will preview some highlights at a formal unveiling of the scoreboard today, but they want to keep things mostly a surprise. They promise a range of programming, made possible by high-definition LED technology that the Lerner family paid to have upgraded beyond the basic specifications called for in the ballpark's design. The city built the ballpark, and the Lerner family owns the team.

"We're just limited by our imaginations," said David Lundin, the Nationals' scoreboard producer.

Few may be happier than Lundin about the move to the new ballpark on South Capitol Street SE. RFK Stadium is nearly 50 years old and simply wasn't built to handle modern scoreboard technology.

At RFK, the people who operated the scoreboard couldn't even see it directly. Lundin and his staff used to work from a bunker under the bleachers, and the only view they got of the scoreboard came from a closed-circuit TV hookup.

Now, Lundin and his crew of nearly two dozen technicians will be perched at the highest point in Nationals Park, above the press box behind home plate, and have a clear view of what the fans are seeing.

From their control room, they'll mix and match videos, statistics and animated graphics, all flowing from a bank of computers. That will be accented by the prerecorded music and other audio blasting through the ballpark, including players' favorite tunes that are blared when they come to bat.

The best scoreboards do more than provide on-base percentages and other inside information: They pump up fans. Lundin's team is working on plans to keep the crowd energized and engaged.

The scoreboard -- 101 feet long and 47 feet high -- will be among the biggest and the best in baseball, officials said. Atlanta's screen is slightly larger, and [Kansas City](#) has plans for a scoreboard that would be the biggest in the nation, Lundin said. But the screen is plenty big for the entertainment the Nats have planned, officials said.

The ballpark has a separate scoreboard to show scores of out-of-town games. It stretches 102 feet across the outfield wall and will be updated constantly. And video panels that will carry animation and advertising run along the first- and third-base lines at the club level.

On Opening Day, the stadium will open at 3:30 p.m., well before the 8 p.m. game, so that fans will have plenty of time to look it over. The Nationals plan to have the big board going nonstop from the moment fans start coming through the gates.

"We treat everything like a TV broadcast," said John Guagliano, the team's vice president of marketing and broadcasting. "Everything has to be timed. We're truly developing a show."

The Nationals developed the graphics, which then were put together by Purchase, N.Y.-based ANC Sports, which also installed much of the equipment. ANC designers send the finished graphics over the Internet to the ballpark, where they are stored on computers that allow them to be punched up at a moment's notice.

Recent technological advances will allow the computers to sort a maze of statistics about each player and, with a touch of a button, slice and dice the information to match the action. The scoreboard's game-action video will come from two camera positions run by operators near first and third bases and from robotic cameras in center field, atop the scoreboard, and high behind home plate. Two camera operators will roam the stands.

"We want to have entertainment going every second," Lundin said.