



Atlanta tries to hit one into the stands

It takes an awful lot of dream or an awful lot of commercial expectation to make a hard-headed, business-minded city like Atlanta plunk down \$18-million for a major league sports stadium—especially when it ends up by tagging on an additional \$700,000 to insure completion within a year.

Yet that is exactly what Atlanta has done, and all without any rock-hard assurance that it is going to get the big teams to fill its seats for baseball (51,500) and football (57,100). Of course, Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr., (picture) and his associates think they have the transfer of the Milwaukee (nee Boston) Braves nailed down for next spring. But the Milwaukee city fathers are putting up a brisk fight in the courts, and nothing is yet sealed and delivered.

The bait. The answer, of course, is that the advent of a major league team brings with it a shower of gold—much from out of town—even if it peters out after a few years. One survey figures that just in 1961, after the New York Giants moved to San Francisco, \$11-million was spent in the city on baseball entertainment.

Atlanta's stadium boosters

figure their chances this way. They'll be the first major league baseball city in the South. The city's own population is 1.2-million; to that add 25-million people in seven Southeastern states, tied by a network of 32 expressway lanes less than a mile from downtown Atlanta. Six metropolitan centers are within 2½ hours driving time of the stadium, and there's not a traffic light to balk them.

On the air. For the first year, baseball attendance should hit 1.5-million, according to Coca-Cola bottler Arthur L. Montgomery, one of the project's sparkplugs. For his part, Mayor Allen thinks \$50-million a year would be "a very low estimate" for the dollar turnover and boost in sales and services. There are also rosy expectations for TV and radio revenues.

Atlanta is betting that its fine spring and fall weather should put it way ahead of chilly Milwaukee, where postponements are a hazard. And even Milwaukee, with a top team and the first glow of novelty, shattered all kinds of attendance records. It took quite a few years, and considerable downgrading of the team, before its attendance began to shrink.