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Thrill-seekers take on Miller Park girder painting

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Kristyna Wentz-Graff

Pete Johnson hangs above the Miller Park field, stretching out to touch up girders with a fresh coat of paint on Friday. Johnson is a painter with Base Group. The Colorado company won a contract to paint hard-to-get-to areas of the ballpark's superstructure.

By Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel

print e-mail

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Photo Gallery



Extreme painters at Miller Park

From a distance, the painters - hanging 270 feet above the Miller Park field by ropes - look like astronauts in a weightless environment, spinning, performing somersaults and bouncing from one girder to the next.

Armed with spray-paint guns, they have been painting a relatively small portion of the stadium's radial, retractable roof.

Normally, a paint crew charged with such a challenging job would build scaffolding and hang it from the top of the stadium. Workers would power wash the girders and deck, apply the primer and top coating, and maybe add some touch-ups with a brush.

It's a time-consuming and cumbersome process.

"You can only reach what is in front of you," said Mike Duckett, executive director of the Miller Park Stadium District.

That's not how the guys at the Base Group in Arvada, Colo., operate. Adventurers all, they employ their mountain-climbing and ice-climbing skills and treat the Miller Park girders like a climb in the Tetons.

And they do it at less cost.

The Base Group is a small company that employs skilled thrill-seekers to do challenging paint jobs. Once hired, they are given rope-access technique training that gives them additional skills to paint in hard-to-reach places.

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