

# Osaka man arrested after reserving and canceling 1,873 seats at 2 baseball games to get more space

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Who doesn't enjoy the thrill of live baseball? The crack of the bat and the roar of the crowd as wacky mascots take the field are but a few of the delights that can only be truly enjoyed firsthand.

But for some people, that also means cramped seating among other people who have proven themselves capable of using their own children as weapons to attack each other. It's crazy enough to drive some people to equally crazy lengths just to get a little more elbow room.

Enter 41-year-old Kiyoshi Shibamura, who on Sept 10 last year reserved a total of 1,873 seats online for two games between the Orix Buffaloes and SoftBank Hawks at Osaka's Kyocera Dome on the 28th and 29th of that same month. He then cancelled all but his own, thus ensuring that no one else would be sitting in a roughly 300-seat radius of himself.

These particular games were right at the end of the regular season and featured a visiting team that would go on to be the 2019 NPB (Nippon Professional Baseball) Champions. So, these games were especially popular and the cancelled seats were valued at approximately 10.86 million yen.

Naturally, those with a stake in this revenue weren't happy and an investigation was launched. It probably wasn't too hard to find the one guy sitting among the hundreds of cancelled seats and on March 11, Shibamura was arrested on charges of obstructing business.

▼ Highlights from the Sept 29 game, show that it was otherwise well-attended, but the empty patch of roughly 900 seats around Shibamura can be seen behind third base in this video.

According to police he admitted to the charges saying "I wanted to watch the game comfortably with no people around" and "I wanted to stand out [on TV]." The plan certainly worked but was not without consequences.

Despite the ingenuity and sheer patience it took to craft nearly 2,000 fake identities to make all those reservations, comments online had little sympathy for the suspect.

"He didn't think this through very well, did he?"

"He committed a crime so he could stand out on TV? There's a genius."

"I'm glad they caught him. Sure it's not a major crime but these little things add up and before you know it society is broken."

"I know how he feels. But there are better ways to go about it."

"It's an Orix game, so it was a victimless crime."

"It's not like 1,800 empty seats at an Orix game is a rare occurrence."

"Wouldn't he have been surrounded by empty seats at a Buffaloes game anyway?"

As you can see, there was also no shortage of Orix Buffalo cracks among the comments. For those unfamiliar with Japanese baseball, the Buffaloes are a perennially low-ranked team with the arguably smallest fanbase in NPB.

In a way though, that does increase the negative impact of his crime as the Buffaloes probably don't have the financial reserves of other teams.