

## Venues Today

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**Subject:** FW: Jan. 4, 2006 Newsletter



# VENUESToday

The news behind the headlines

Dear April,

**January 4, 2006 VOL. V, Number I ISSN 1547-4143**

Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. Look for VT Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Linda Deckard at the INTIX Annual Conference in Boston Jan. 10-13, along with VT reps Sue Nichols, Pauline Davis and April Stroud. Managing Editor Natasha Emmons will be at the Western Fairs Association Annual Convention in San Diego early next week, then move on to IAAM's International Stadium Management Conference in Tampa, Fla. For a full calendar listing, to view archives or subscribe to *Venues Today*, visit our Web site at [www.venuestoday.com](http://www.venuestoday.com).

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## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"It was because every suite had Mr. and Mrs. VIP in them. Every chairman, vice president and president was there." — Ben Witte, MGR/Levy Restaurants at the Georgia Dome, on record-setting gross in the skyboxes during the Nokia Sugar Bowl

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## VENUE NEWS

### *Hampton Roads (Va.) Convention Center*



### **HAMPTON ROADS SELECTS SMG TO MANAGE NEW CONVENTION CENTER**

SMG took over management of the new Hampton Roads (Va.) Convention Center Jan. 4 with Lew Dawley, a veteran of the business, at the helm as indefinite interim director, said Sims Hinds, SMG senior vice president, Sales and Development. Joe Tsao, director of the Hampton Coliseum Arena, who had been doubling up as convention center manager since the venue opened April 28,

moved back across the street to his arena.

Pete Peterson, assistant city manager and contract administrator, said the three-and-a-half year contract to handle convention center operations requires that the city pay SMG a fixed fee of \$125,000 annually. No incentives were built in because "it's hard to develop incentives for a building you haven't had in operation that long," Peterson said.

According to the published city budget, the total annual operating budget for the new center is \$8,546,475, including the debt service of \$4,812,782, Peterson said. The debt service is for 25 years. The venue was funded with a meal and restaurant tax plus some anticipated operating revenues.

The contract with SMG also includes two three-year renewal options. At that renewal time, an incentive will be discussed, Peterson surmised.

Because of the lack of history, financials were not a big play in selecting a management firm, Hinds said, adding that Global Spectrum and Waterford Management Group competed for the account.

"Virginia is such a competitive marketplace for convention centers," Hinds said. "You have the Richmond Convention Center 60 miles to the west; the new Virginia Beach Convention Center 30 miles to the east, part of it open; and then Norfolk with their small convention center. So [Hampton Roads] wanted horsepower."

The RFP's went out in early November. SMG was chosen the week before Christmas and signed the final contract Dec. 30.

Concessions will be operated in-house, Hinds said. Catering is handled by the 400-room Embassy Suites that opened next door two months ago.

The Hampton Roads Convention Center has 108,000 square feet of exhibit space; a 28,000-square-foot ballroom; and a 13,000-square-foot conference center that can be used as a standalone.

Dawley has been a consultant for SMG for the past year-and-a-half. Prior to that, he was full-time corporate. "He ran the Washington [D.C.] Convention Center, and Minneapolis, and was the original manager of the Pennsylvania Convention Center," Hinds said.

"This is one of the nicest, premier facilities on the Atlantic Coast. It's a terrific growth area with a lot of tourist amenities. We think it will be a really attractive building for that market," Hinds said, noting there is a block-able hotel base of 2,500 rooms in walking distance.

Hinds said SMG is reviewing the budget now. Business will be comparable to that found at convention centers in Savannah, Ga.; North Charleston, S.C.; and Mobile, Ala., he said. "We think it will be a very active facility." — Linda Deckard  
*Interviewed for this story: Pete Peterson, (757) 727-6319; Sims Hinds, 215-592-6628*



**Bob Wagoner; Ken Lappone**

## **FACES & PLACES: WAGONER MOVES TO MINOT; LAPPONESE SELLING CARTS OF COLORADO; DUMOULIN RETIRES**

**Bob Wagoner** is trading balmy Montana for equally temperate North Dakota, once again making his move in the dead of winter. Wagoner, who resigned his post as director of Metrapark, Billings, three weeks ago, accepted a position as director of the **North Dakota State Fair**, Minot, replacing Jerry Iverson, who retired. He'll start there "sometime next week" depending upon the sale of his Billings home. The moving weather is good, he said.

**Ken Lappone** is also changing companies, though not addresses. Lappone started Jan. 2 as vice president of sports and entertainment for **Carts of Colorado**. He had been with Tangent POS/Venue1 for 16 years. Prior to that, he sold computerized ticketing machines for Di-An Controls for five years.

In upstate New York, there is a job opening at the **Mid-Hudson Civic Center**, Poughkeepsie, where **Susan DuMoulin** retired Jan. 1 from her post as executive director for 10 years. Robert Latimer, chair of the board of directors, confirmed the search is on, but deferred questions to John Morgan, chair of the personnel committee, who could not be reached by press time. DuMoulin oversaw all operations of Mair Hall and the McCann Ice Arena.

Wagoner said he has long been interested "in that particular structure of a big, major state fair, so I started talking to them and it all fell together, so I'm excited." But he announced his resignation from Metrapark prior to being offered the new job.

"The reason I decided I needed to leave Metrapark is I am pretty well convinced the county is going to go to private management within the next few months. I know when that happens the manager will be replaced, so I figured why not be ahead of the curve," Wagoner said. He is not against private management per se. "Depending on the application and circumstances, private management is a great tool," Wagoner added. It will be up to the Yellowstone County Commissioners, who have hired consultant Ray Ward to study the situation, to decide whether it's right for Metrapark

Bill Dutcher, who was Wagoner's assistant manager, has been named interim manager in Billings. "He'll do an excellent job for them," Wagoner said.

"The North Dakota State Fair is one of the premier agricultural fairs in North America," Wagoner said. MontanaFair, held at Metrapark, is the largest fair in its state, but a lot of the operation expertise for which Wagoner was hired there had to do with venue management. Both operations have a similar annual budget of close to \$6 million, he said. "The last four years we turned a profit every year for the fair," he said of MontanaFair.

Wagoner will look at increasing off-season use in Minot, something every fair seeks to do, but without a major arena. But he will maintain his membership in the International Association of Assembly Managers. "The business contacts in IAAM will be important to me and the North Dakota State Fair. And I've been enjoying being a member of the board of governors at Senior Executive Symposium at Cornell."

Starting in the business in 1966 working part time for a promoter, Wagoner's first building was the Toledo (Ohio) Masonic Auditorium, 1975-1980; followed by the Spartanburg (S.C.) Memorial Auditorium, 1980-1985; Wicomico Civic Center, Salisbury, Md., 1985-1998; Norfolk (Va.) Scope, 1998-2001, and then Metrapark,

where he moved in December of 2001.

Lapponese is also very active in the industry. He is currently on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Concessionaires and he received the Joe Anzivino Distinguished Allied Member Award from the International Association of Assembly Managers (IAAM) in 2004.

"I'll be calling on the sports and entertainment industry," from major concessions companies to self-ops, Lapponese said. He has no designated "territory." — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Bob Wagoner, (406) 245-4925; Ken Lapponese, (636) 926-3476; Rob Latimer, (845) 416-2501*

### **Interim MLS Earthquakes logo**



**MLS TEAM FORSAKES SAN  
JOSE FOR NEW HOME IN  
HOUSTON**

The Major League Soccer (MLS) San Jose (Calif.) Earthquakes, who finished with the league's best record last year, will move to Houston during the upcoming season after failing to reach an agreement for a soccer stadium with their home city, it was announced by investor-operator of the team AEG.

The move from San Jose was a matter of the venue not fitting the team's ambitions, according to Jerry Mimnaugh, executive director for Spartan Shops, which provide the commercial services for San Jose State University's Spartan Stadium.

"When it became clear two years ago that renovating the stadium here for soccer wasn't going to work for the university or MLS, then it became clear that a long-term home for the Earthquakes would have to be in their own stadium," said Mimnaugh.

The University will "definitely" feel the significant financial impact of not having 16 professional soccer games next year, but Mimnaugh said he could not speculate on what the hit would be at press time.

"We'll look for other funding sources to make up for the shortfall, though I don't know what those are," he said. "We're a university, not a professional soccer venue per se, so our mission is different. The MLS has set that goal up [for its teams] and it's a good one, it makes perfect sense. They've been good partners with the university for 10 years and the university is looking at the stadium on a long-term basis for more university use for the football team and men's and women's soccer."

In retrospect, Mimnaugh said he didn't want to imply that the Earthquakes were not successful at State, but he said the team — with mid-range attendance among MLS teams at 12,000-13,000 fans per game — didn't draw as well as they might have if they'd had local ownership.

The 26,000-28,000 capacity venue will be used as many days in the future as it was when the Earthquakes were tenants, but without a new tenant for the time being.

AEG President and CEO Timothy J. Leiweke welcomed the team to Houston during a Dec. 15 ceremony and said the future will more than likely include the soccer-specific stadium the league long pursued. He told *Venues Today* that, "Historically, Houston has been a very supportive market for many soccer games that have recently been

promoted there. From international matches to the Interliga tournament to other exhibitions, we have found that Houston sports fans definitely attend soccer games."

Leiweke said that the league had also received a "great deal of interest" from local investors who "not only want to invest in the MLS team, but will work with us to develop a state-of-the-art soccer stadium that the Houston market deserves."

Though a new stadium was one of the sticking points in San Jose, the Houston team will play its first three years in the 32,000-capacity Robertson Stadium, home of the University of Houston's NCAA football team. The MLS' 11th season kicks off on April 1. The name of the new club will be announced later this month after the results from a naming contest are in. The name, colors and competition records of the Earthquakes have been retained by MLS for a future expansion team in the Bay Area and will not carry over to the Houston club, but all Earthquake players and coaching staff currently under contract will transfer to Houston as part of the new organization.

"It was an extremely tough decision," said MLS spokesman Dan Courtemanche of moving the team from its home of a decade. "They had a passionate following, but the challenge for the Earthquakes was finding the appropriate facilities and committed local ownership. Since they arrived in 1996, the team was not in a position to be financially viable and more than \$50 million was invested, lost really, since its inception, \$20 million of it from AEG. As much as the Bay Area has a passionate fan following, without a facility as a driving force, it just wasn't going to work out."

Ironically, as the team was announcing its move, the city of San Jose put together a package to be voted on by the general public this year that could bring the team back with a new facility as part of a plan being spearheaded by Lewis Wolff, part of the Oakland A's ownership team.

Courtemanche called Houston a "tremendous" market for soccer, pointing to its size, diversity and passionate soccer fan base as plusses for the new team. Houston, the fourth largest city in the country with the fifth largest Hispanic population in the country (1.4 million) and the lowest median age of the nation's major metro areas, is demographically ripe for MLS expansion, based on the league's established patterns of appealing to male youth players and fans 18-34, families and Hispanic audiences.

The Houston team is being headed up by local sports legend Oliver Luck, the former 1980s Houston Oilers quarterback who will serve as its president. Luck has been the CEO of the Harris County Houston Sports Authority for the past eight years, working on developing new facilities in the area and luring an MLS franchise. "We believe we have the right man locally in Oliver Luck, who is well connected in the community and the plan is to be at Robertson while we work on a soccer-specific venue," Courtemanche said. — Gil Kaufman

*Interviewed for this story: Jerry Mimnaugh, (408) 924-1900; Dan Courtemanche, (212) 450-1225; Tim Leiweke (213) 742-7100*



### ***Clovis (N.M.) Civic Center; Neil McMullin***

#### **GLOBAL SPECTRUM TRANSITIONS FROM CONSULTANT TO MANAGER IN CLOVIS**

Other than construction delays, everything is according to plan in Clovis, N.M., where the \$6 million, 30,000-square-foot civic center is expected to open the end of April, early May with Global Spectrum's Neil McMullin at the helm.

Global Spectrum started working with the city on a consulting basis, then scored the management contract in mid-November. McMullin was moved there from his former Global Spectrum post at the Ikon Center, Cheyenne, Wyo. This week, he was to be joined by a new sales and marketing director, Nick Mondragon, a local.

And while Global and the city are anticipating a grand opening for the Clovis Civic Center featuring entertainment, food and a taste of content, from a home and garden show set up to a conference to a wedding, there is even more going on behind the scenes.

"We're also doing some consulting work with the county on a 4,000-seat multipurpose arena they are building on the fairgrounds," McMullin said, referring to the Curry County Fair. While they don't have a management deal for that arena, if they do get it, McMullin can better use local staff at both venues.

Joe Thomas, city manager and contract administrator, said the deal with Global Spectrum to manage the Clovis Civic Center is for three years. The city pays them a fee of \$90,000 and assumes all expenses. The operating losses will be subsidized with a lodgers tax.

The venue was funded through implementation of a one-sixteenth-of-a-percent gross receipts tax on any merchandise or service. That tax was allocated to venue construction in 1996. By 2003, \$2 million had accumulated and the city opted to proceed with construction. Municipal bonds were issued and construction began in January of 2005, with a February of 2006 opening date. That tax will be used to meet the \$400,000 annual debt service, Thomas said.

The opening however, was delayed, possibly because of Hurricane Katrina. The architect Dekker, Perich and Sabatini, Albuquerque, has not confirmed that, Thomas said, but in talking to contractors and subcontractors, he's come to understand the delay in getting air conditioning units could easily be attributed to the fact it's more attractive to deliver 20 units to New Orleans before sending two to Clovis. That's been the big holdup.

The idea for a civic center dates back to 1979, when the plan was not approved during

a local election. But Clovis has struggled with lack of gathering room all these years, Thomas said. "The only facility we have now capable of serving a banquet for in excess of 100 people is Camden Air Force Base. We really have not had a venue for gatherings larger than that. Other communities in New Mexico of a similar size have civic centers."

McMullin said the population of Clovis is 45,000, with 100,000 in the metroplex marketplace which the building will serve. From May to May, he projects the venue will host 300 events. The operating budget is in the neighborhood of \$800,000-\$900,000, he said. The biggest event booked to date will be in 2007 — the Economic Development Summit for the state of New Mexico, historically held in Albuquerque. Clovis is located six miles from the Texas border.

"Our best selling point is the friendly, personable hospitality here," McMullin said. "We will maintain that small-town charm and add professionalism and excellence."

The Clovis Civic Center will boast the largest ballroom in town at 12,000 square feet, one room, column free. The closest hotel is a quarter mile away, a 60-room Comfort Inn.

Thomas said an ad hoc committee determined minimum standards for the civic center. "Over a series of meetings they determined the three categories: had-to-have, nice-to-have, and pie-in-the-sky stuff. The last would be an exhibition center capable of hosting major trade shows."

The city sought private management for that level of expertise in marketing as well as operations. "Global seemed to have more of a wide spectrum of experience with facilities our size to the big sports arena. They had a mechanism in place to market our building. We have no expectation of it breaking even, but we hope in a few years we won't have to subsidize to a great extent."

Besides the ballroom, the civic center has two meeting rooms of 1,750 square feet and 1,550 square feet, a full-service kitchen with catering capabilities, 3,000 square feet of pre-function space, and a 3,000-square-foot plaza designed for outdoor events. —  
Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Neil McMullin, (505) 935-5000; Joe Thomas, (505) 763-9650*

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## BOOKINGS



**HOT**tickets

### RODEOS AND ROCKETTES REIGN

**HOT TICKETS** is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to **Venues Today** e-newsletter. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating capacity category, which took place since Nov. 30, 2005. To submit reports, e-mail [HotTickets@venuestoday.com](mailto:HotTickets@venuestoday.com) or fax to (714) 378-0040.

The **Hot Tickets** this week as reported to **Venues Today**:

#### 15,001 or More Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$8,753,732; *Event:* Wrangler National Finals Rodeo; *Venue:* **Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 175,513; *Ticket Range:* \$250-\$36.50; *Promoter:* Las Vegas Events; *Dates:* Dec. 2-12; *No. of Shows:* 10

2) *Gross Sales:* \$3,400,861; *Event:* U2; *Venue:* **TD Banknorth Garden, Boston**; *Attendance:* 34,583; *Ticket Range:* \$165-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Tea Party Concerts (CCE), The Next Adventure; *Dates:* Dec. 4-5; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,839,020; *Event:* U2; *Venue:* **Savvis Center, St. Louis**; *Attendance:* 19,923; *Ticket Range:* \$160-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Clear Channel Entertainment (CCE), The Next Adventure; *Dates:* Dec. 14; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,819,610; *Event:* Depeche Mode; *Venue:* **Madison Square Garden Arena, New York**; *Attendance:* 28,516; *Ticket Range:* \$80.50-\$35.50; *Promoter:* Ron Delsener Presents (CCE); *Dates:* Dec. 7-8; *No. of Shows:* 2

5) *Gross Sales:* \$1,791,497; *Event:* U2; *Venue:* **Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland**; *Attendance:* 19,765; *Ticket Range:* \$160-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Belkin Productions (CCE), The Next Adventure; *Dates:* Dec. 10; *No. of Shows:* 1

#### 10,001 - 15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$903,158; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra; *Venue:* **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; *Attendance:* 18,984; *Ticket Range:* \$49.50-\$39.50; *Promoter:* The Cellar Door Companies (CCE); *Dates:* Dec. 11; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$797,218; *Event:* Neil Diamond; *Venue:* **The E Center, West Valley City, Utah**; *Attendance:* 11,215; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$42.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Apregan Group, Concerts West, Sal Bonafede; *Dates:* Dec. 16; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$775,125; *Event:* James Taylor; *Venue:* **Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall**; *Attendance:* 7,198; *Ticket Range:* \$250-\$50; *Promoter:* LPG Benefit Association; *Dates:* Dec. 17; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$651,750; *Event:* Neil Diamond; *Venue:* **iPayOne Center, San Diego**; *Attendance:* 11,313; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$42.50; *Promoter:* Avalon Attractions (CCE), Viejas Entertainment; *Dates:* Dec. 21; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$597,309; *Event:* Disney on Ice; *Venue:* **Spokane (Wash.) Arena**; *Attendance:* 33,101; *Ticket Range:* \$40-\$15; *Promoter:* Feld Entertainment; *Dates:* Nov. 30–Dec. 4; *No. of Shows:* 8

### **5,001-10,000 Seats**

1) *Gross Sales:* \$64,903,052; *Event:* Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular; *Venue:* **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; *Attendance:* 1,080,801; *Ticket Range:* \$145.50-\$45.50; *Promoter:* Radio City Entertainment; *Dates:* Nov. 3–Jan. 1; *No. of Shows:* 225

2) *Gross Sales:* \$6,183,836; *Event:* "Cathy Rigby is Peter Pan"; *Venue:* **Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York**; *Attendance:* 126,519; *Ticket Range:* \$94.50-\$30.50; *Promoter:* Radio City Entertainment, Running Subway LLC; *Dates:* Nov. 30–Dec. 30; *No. of Shows:* 39

3) *Gross Sales:* \$928,650; *Event:* KROQ Almost Acoustic Christmas; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 12,382; *Ticket Range:* \$75; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts; *Dates:* Dec. 10–11; *No. of Shows:* 2

4) *Gross Sales:* \$616,485; *Event:* Kanye West; *Venue:* **Aladdin Theatre, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 5,546; *Ticket Range:* \$150-\$75; *Promoter:* Evening Star Productions (CCE); *Dates:* Dec. 31; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$491,963; *Event:* James Taylor; *Venue:* **Arena at Harbor Yard, Bridgeport, Conn.**; *Attendance:* 8,042; *Ticket Range:* \$65.25-\$50.25; *Promoter:* Jim Koplik Presents (CCE); *Dates:* Dec. 19; *No. of Shows:* 1

### **5,000 or Fewer Seats**

1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,795,223; *Event:* Atlanta Ballet's Nutcracker; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 43,802; *Ticket Range:* \$88-\$12; *Promoter:* Atlanta Ballet; *Dates:* Dec. 9–30 *No. of Shows:* 23

2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,303,805; *Event:* Singing Xmas Tree; *Venue:* **Keller Auditorium, Portland, Ore.**; *Attendance:* 33,804; *Ticket Range:* \$56.75-\$11.25; *Promoter:* One Voice Productions; *Dates:* Nov. 25–Dec. 3; *No. of Shows:* 10

3) *Gross Sales:* \$979,626; *Event:* Annie; *Venue:* **Tampa Bay (Fla.) Performing Arts Center**; *Attendance:* 18,108; *Ticket Range:* \$67.50-\$20; *Promoter:* FTA, In-house; *Dates:* Dec. 13–18 *No. of Shows:* 8

4) *Gross Sales:* \$851,800; *Event:* Jerry Seinfeld; *Venue:* **The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 8,296; *Ticket Range:* \$150-\$75; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, In-house; *Dates:* Dec. 26–27; *No. of Shows:* 2

5) *Gross Sales:* \$717,706; *Event:* Jerry Seinfeld; *Venue:* **Tampa Bay (Fla.)**

**Performing Arts Center**; Attendance: 9,971; Ticket Range: \$78.50-\$48.50;  
Promoter: JS Touring, In-house; Dates: Dec. 10–11; No. of Shows: 4

Compiled by April Stroud, [HotTickets@venuestoday.com](mailto:HotTickets@venuestoday.com)

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## MARKETING

### **Rendering of Super Bowl XL ad on GM Renaissance Center**



#### **MOTOR CITY GETS BRANDED BY THE SUPER BOWL**

It took 10 days and hundreds of thousands of dollars to design, produce and install a 25,000-square-foot building wrap on the GM Renaissance Center, Detroit, site of the National Football League (NFL) Headquarters during Super Bowl XL.

The banner, however, is just one piece of the entire puzzle which will make up the experience to the Super Bowl, set to played on Ford Field, Detroit, Feb. 5. The NFL selected five companies, jointly named the Decor Design Team, to integrate this year's theme, "The Road to Forty."

Infinite Scale Design Group is the design branch of that team. And, along with Vision and Roe, the other two companies are subjectMatter, Dallas, in charge of the overall project management, and C.

Dall Brown Lighting, Plano, Texas, a lighting design company specializing in theatrical and large scale projects, coordinating the lighting component.

Aamira Bussey, of the firm Iovil, George, Inc., Detroit, which is handling the Decor Design Team's public relations, said the theme, "The Road to Forty," was conceived by the NFL to carry a dual marketing message. Detroit is a city known for its cars and this is the 40th anniversary of the Super Bowl.

Every bit of the design this year was done to form a cumulative and cohesive experience. The decor across the city of Detroit, from the airport to the hotels to the stadium to the streets, is consistent across the board. It includes structural elements. It includes logos on a door to a carpet piece to a wall mural. Four-thousand street banners will don the streets of the city.

"It has taken us 10 months to put this together," Smith said. "We walked all the buildings. We would say, "OK, so people will be walking here. Will they turn to the left or the right? What should they see when they do turn? When we looked at the different hotels, we used some designs based on who would be staying there. There was a basic kit of parts we would use, but then we adapted each venue."

The Renaissance Center banner, which incorporates the Super Bowl XL brand with bright reds and blues, a massive football and a prominent Cadillac logo, spans 21 stories and 72 columns of windows, and is suspended 50 stories from the ground.

"I don't really want to get into the actual cost, but it was expensive," said Cameron

Smith, creative director and partner, Infinite Scale Design Group, Salt Lake City. "It was outrageously expensive. The installation was expensive.

"We designed the field, things in the ceiling," he said. "It will all surround you and you will be in it."

Vision International, also from Salt Lake City, printed the large banner. "It wasn't the largest we have done," said Gene Chambers, vice president, Vision. "But it was unique because it was done on the pressure-sensitive vinyl so it would adhere to the windows. The holes allow the building's occupants to see out."

Vision had to print the banner and cut it in vertical strips. It ended up being 672, 4-by-9-foot panels. It took three, 24-hour days to print the banner. It took another three days to cut, mark, and package it.

"The biggest challenge came with the installation. Each panel was labeled. They had to put it together like a big jigsaw puzzle," Chambers said. The installation was done by Roe Fabricators, Philadelphia.

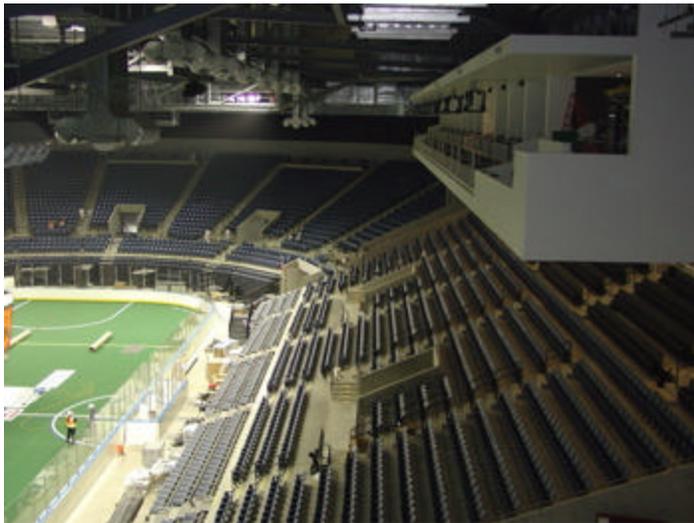
Infinite Scale Design Group has worked with Vision International prior, both being involved in the overall design of the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Games. — Pam Sherborne

*Interviewed for this story: Cameron Smith, (801) 363-1881; Aamira Bussey, (313) 832-2210; Gene Chambers, (801) 549-8637*

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## CONCESSIONS

### ***Stockton Arena, suite level (360 Architecture photo)***



### **SPORTSERVICE OFF TO SMOOTH START AT STOCKTON**

The Stockton (Calif.) Arena has set a grand opening for Jan. 15, which will include 50 to 60 tables for a full-service banquet on the floor preceding a Neil Diamond concert, but the Sportservice crew will have had a month to ramp up at the 10,000-seat multipurpose facility before then.

At press time, Sportservice General Manager Patrick Bluso and his team — which includes

one head chef (Richard Valario, a Sportservice venue-opening veteran), three sous chefs, five cooks, 70 hourly staff and 60 nonprofit group staff — have served nine events, plus at least four banquets in the 250-seat Comcast Club since the soft opening Dec. 10.

"I think he likes the excitement," Bluso said of Valario, who opened Great American Ballpark in Cincinnati and Petco Park in San Diego. Bluso is also a long-time Sportservice employee, coming most recently from Fifth Third Field in Dayton, Ohio.

"We're at the point now where we're developing the staff. As you know, openings are challenging," Bluso said.

There are 38 concession points of sale in the building and 12 carts, which were manufactured by Corsair. The point-of-sale system is Tangent (Venue1) and accepts credit cards, but has not been set up yet for other payment methods, such as smart cards, though Bluso said he likes the idea of that.

Operation of point-of-sale systems and navigating the venue in general are the main training points now, he said.

Michael Reinsdorf, founding partner of Chicago-based International Facilities Group (IFG), which manages the arena for the city, said Sportservice sent "their A team."

"We went through an RFP process and Sportservice was the best deal. But we have a long-term relationship with Sportservice that goes back to the early '80s with the Chicago White Sox," he said. "It was an easy decision."

The initial contract is for seven years with a "typical industry standard" percentage rent, Reinsdorf said. Sportservice did not pay for any of the infrastructure or equipment. That tab was picked up 100 percent by the city.

"We wanted this facility to operate the same way as an 18,000-seat facility," Reinsdorf said. "In the club area and suite area we really wanted to make sure we did a first-class delivery of the food service. A lot of club areas you go to in small facilities don't get the quality we're doing in Stockton."

Suite party packages (designed to serve 12) start at \$375 for the venue's popular deluxe nine-layer Mexican dip, breaded chicken tenderloins, cheese and pepperoni pizza, alpine hot dogs, potato chips with roasted vegetable dip, fresh cookies and brownies, and a selection of soft drinks.

There is a second option priced at \$443 for grilled chicken breasts, a fresh fruit platter, spinach and artichoke dip, California chopped salad, marinated chicken and beef fajita combo, popcorn, deep dish apple pie, and soft drinks.

The most expensive, at \$543, offers fresh vegetables with avocado dip, a cheese and pepperoni platter, tomato and fresh mozzarella, jumbo shrimp, fresh asparagus, tri tip of beef, mixed nuts, crème brulee cheesecake, and soft drinks.

There is also an individual menu, serving six people per order. The Hat Trick Sampler with breaded chicken tenderloin, buffalo chicken wings and vegetarian spring rolls has been popular, Bluso said. That sells for \$56.

The nine-layer dip at \$37 has also been a hot seller, he said, as have the garlic French fries at \$21. Fresh asparagus, a local crop, is offered in-season at \$21. The Stockton area is also known for fresh fruit and tri tip beef.

Sportservice offers an in-suite attendant for \$75 per event.

On the concessions side, a quarter of a 16-inch pizza has been popular at \$5.75 and garlic fries at \$4.25. "We're also doing a cheesesteak sandwich on a sourdough bread that's working really well here in this area," Bluso said. That sells for \$6.25.

Research on local favorites was done "eating at a lot of local restaurants and talking to

a lot of locals," Bluso said. One place where Sportservice "dropped the ball" on opening was the absence of hot chocolate on the menu, which they remedied quickly and now sell for \$2, he said. But it's not just the hot stuff that's selling. "Dippin Dots is moving very well and we have Dryers Ice Cream." Dryers novelties sell for \$4 and pints for \$5.50.

The soft drink exclusive is Pepsi, which sells for \$2.75 for 21 ounces and \$4 for 32 ounces and a souvenir cup featuring the new arena. "I'm seeing a trend toward the fountain [drinks]," Bluso said. But bottled water is a hot seller at \$3.50, he added. Draft beer goes for \$6.50.

Coors Light is the beer that gets the biggest push since they have the naming rights to a bar on the club level, the Silver Bullet Bar.

The foodservice operation uses a lot of Cisco product, Bluso said. There is one main kitchen and two concessions kitchens. Sportservice was invited to come in and work with the architect, 360 Architecture, on the design a year ago. "So we did have some input in back of concessions stands, how the kitchen was laid out and equipment needs. That was a very good transition," Bluso said.

In event catering, Sportservice uses a lot of live-action service stations, such as carving meat, serving salad and dessert carts. Bluso said the chefs don't mind the spotlight. "It's a very good group of chefs. They enjoy being out with the public." Those setups are priced from \$23.25 to \$41.75 per person. The stations are also sold as upgrades to dinners from \$95 to \$255 for meats, \$11.75 to \$13.50 for pastas and shrimp

Breakfasts range from \$10.75 per person for a Continental Buffet to \$17.25 per person for a Base Line Buffet, featuring scrambled eggs, meat choices, potatoes and grits. Boxed lunches range from \$12 for a Mediterranean chicken wrap to \$13 for an Italian hoagie. Entrée salads are priced up to \$16.75, lunch plates to \$22.75 for veal, and to \$19.50 for a sandwich buffet. Dinner prices go up to \$32.75 per person for filet mignon.

The arena is expecting to host 120-140 events annually. Tables for the Neil Diamond banquet event put on by the city are going for \$5,000 to \$10,000. "This is unusual in the industry. When the concert starts, Neil Diamond cannot see people eating," Reinsdorf said.

Bluso said he does have some dreams for the future at the arena, such as adding some interactive games and maybe a bar to the fan deck on the event level concourse. "But right now we're establishing the status quo," he said. "We want to get a little more of a trend development and see where we can go from there." — Natasha Emmons  
*Interviewed for this story: Patrick Bluso, (209) 373-1655; Michael Reinsdorf, (847) 564-5100*



### **Georgia Dome foodservice staff gets a pep talk**

### **FOODSERVICE MANAGERS HANDLE BACK-TO-BACK FOOTBALL GAMES**

On a good day, hosting a single college football bowl game is a challenge. But this year, a handful of cities juggled bowl games *and* National Football League (NFL) contests back-to-back, or, in the case of the Georgia Dome, two bowl games and an NFL game within four days.

"It was definitely a challenge to have the Peach Bowl on Friday, flip the stadium for New Year's festivities, then the Falcons and Panthers NFL game on Sunday and then another flip 18 hours later for the nationally televised Sugar Bowl," said Ben Witte, general manager for MGR/Levy Restaurants for the Georgia Dome. "The field had to be repainted three times, all the banners were changed out."

Witte held a pre-game pep rally to get the troops psyched up for the hectic weekend. Attended by just under 700 staffers, the Dec. 29 rally was aimed at getting employees excited for what was called "trifecta weekend." Witte said managers tried to get each employee as pumped up as possible while explaining that the customers attending each game would "not care if you were tired from the Peach Bowl or the Panthers game."

They did something right, because Witte said out of 5,400 staffing positions for all three games, they had 100 percent employee turnout. The Nokia Sugar Bowl had an \$18.96 per cap, which was well over the typical \$16.50 per cap for NFL games at the venue. Witte said the biggest increase was seen in the skyboxes, which (excluding the 2000 Super Bowl) set a record, with just under \$300,000 in grosses, a healthy jump over the typical \$185,000-\$200,000 for the 203 suites.

"It was because every suite had Mr. and Mrs. VIP in them," said Witte. "Every chairman, vice president and president was there." Witte said the Sugar Bowl per caps and total grosses (\$1.3 million) were especially good considering the game was a 'pop-up,' an unexpected event that had to be moved from its home of 74 years at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina. "Nobody expected the Sugar Bowl to be here," he said.

But even so, Witte said the staff was prepared and didn't run out of any items during the three games. The biggest beverage seller during the Sugar and Peach Bowls was a \$4.50 commemorative 32 oz. soda, which sold around 25,000 per game. There were no final tallies on food, but hot dogs (\$1.50-\$7) were the biggest seller, followed by hamburgers and popcorn.

Grosses for the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl were a bit lower at \$880,000 with a per cap of

\$15.95. The biggest seller at the Peach Bowl, was, not surprisingly, Chick-fil-A chicken sandwiches (\$4), which sold around 7,000 units. Around 1,800 staffers worked each game, manning 160 carts and 40 permanent stands.

Things weren't much easier at Alltel Stadium in Jacksonville, Fla., for the Toyota Gator Bowl, which had less than 18 hours to flip the stadium from an NFL Jaguars game to the college game. It was only the second time since the venue opened in 1995 that there were back-to-back NFL and college games.

Though they were still tabulating final figures, Centerplate General Manager Tom Anastasia said the preliminary numbers of the Gator Bowl were "pretty good," considering that the battle between Louisville and Virginia Tech was not the marquee match-up people had hoped for.

The preliminary per caps were \$13.50 with grosses of \$756,000, a slight dip from last year's numbers. "A lot of folks were expecting this to be a Louisville-Miami game and it ended up changing, but ticket sales picked up at the last minute," Anastasia said. Among the hot-selling items were barbecue, which Alltel began offering as a fresh in-house item this year, and souvenir beer and soda cups. The 22 oz. beer (\$7) featured the Gator Bowl logo and the logos of the two teams, as did the 32 oz. soda (\$5).

The best-selling food item was a foot-long hot dog (\$6). "It's an NFL stadium, so our pricing is more aggressive," said Anastasia. "But what really made things interesting was having to turn over from the Jaguars to the Gator Bowl in 17 hours. So, going in, we stocked each location twice as heavy so we wouldn't have to restock overnight, which would have been impossible." Fans were served by a staff of 1,500 (which included 450 permanent staff filled out by volunteers) at 30 permanent locations and 40 portables. — Gil Kaufman

*Interviewed for this story: Ben Witte, (404) 223-8500; Tom Anastasia, (904) 633-6100*

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## Coming Soon - Our Spotlight on University Venues!

In our **February issue**, we spotlight the ever-challenging world of university venues, from programming to fan behavior, and the wide range of needs in operating a campus facility.

This is also our annual focus on performing arts centers, which are constantly seeking new sources of revenue. We'll update you on that search and on new construction.

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## SHORT TAKES

### **SUPERDOME STUDY PREDICTS NOVEMBER REOPENING**

Ellerbe Becket has estimated repair costs of the Hurricane Katrina-devastated Superdome in New Orleans at \$139.1 million. Construction on the repair phase is expected to begin next month. Work on sealing the roof and remediation of the interior was completed ahead of schedule, and some of the design work for the repairs is

already underway. Management is now expecting football to return in November and all repairs and recommended upgrades to be complete by August 2007. Most of the repair cost is expected to be covered by the state's insurance program and FEMA. The November reopening would allow New Orleans to keep four major football events — the State Farm Bayou Classic, the Nokia Prep Classic (state high school football championships), the Wyndham New Orleans Bowl and the Nokia Sugar Bowl.

Contact: Bill Curl, (504) 587-3921

### **NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION CENTER SCHEDULES REOPENING PHASES**

The Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, which became an impromptu shelter following Hurricane Katrina in August, has announced the building's first post-disaster event will be held in six weeks. Most repair work has been concentrated in the Halls DEF area, which reopens Feb. 17 for the Helen Brett New Orleans Gift & Jewelry Show. By June, Halls D through J and its accompanying meeting space are scheduled to reopen. Halls A through C are scheduled to reopen in November, bringing the venue back up to full occupancy availability. The Louisiana National Guard moved out of Halls H and I last month. There are still several city entities using the property. Restoration work includes 88,000 square yards of custom-designed carpet, permanent roof repairs, door and hardware restoration and replacement, canopy, curtainwall and skylight glass replacement, soffit replacement, sheetrock replacement and a new color scheme. The convention center is privately insured by Zurich North America.

Contact: Sabrina Written, (504) 582-3027

### **FRIEDMAN NAMED CEO OF NEDERLANDER CONCERTS**

Adam Friedman has been appointed chief executive officer of Nederlander Concerts. In this newly created position, Friedman will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the company and oversight of general operations, including the booking and promotion of live concert and special events, and management activities, at all Nederlander-managed and -promoted concert venues and third-party facilities nationwide. He will be based at the company's headquarters in Los Angeles beginning Jan. 19. Friedman comes from House of Blues Concerts Inc., where he held the title of executive vice president and was responsible for day-to-day management and strategic development of the company. Friedman began his career as a corporate attorney and moved to the business side of the entertainment industry when joining MCA Concerts in 1992 (later becoming Universal Concerts and sold to House of Blues Entertainment in 1999).

Contact: Nederlander, (323) 468-1710

### **APOLLO COMPLETES FIRST RESTORATION PHASE**

The Apollo Theater Foundation Inc. has completed the first phase of its restoration plans for the historic Harlem, New York, venue. The theater now has a refurbished terracotta facade, a stainless steel and glass storefront and a new box office. Combining 1940's vintage style with modern details, the traditional Apollo marquee has been restored to include high-tech, programmable LED visuals. Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP led the renovation team. Barr & Barr Builders, Inc. served as the construction managers; Jones Lang LaSalle served as project managers. RULE7MEDIA provided the LED technology for the theater's new marquee, and will create the digital content seen on both the marquee and the plasma screens located internally and externally at the theater. Financial support came from the NYC Economic Development Corp; United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration; Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation; New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation; and the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission. Additional private sector funding was received from Time Warner Inc., Citigroup Foundation, Bank of America, News Corporation and Bloomberg LP.

Contact: Dana Baxter, (212) 460-0526

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