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Venues TODAY

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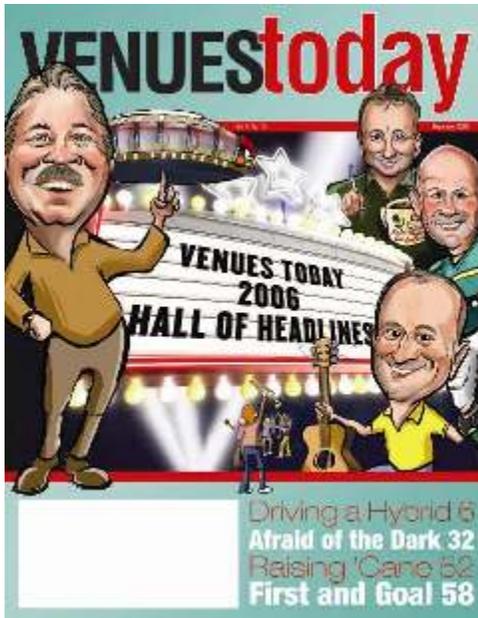
QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“With the emergence of the connected fan, the relationship between the fan and the team or the fan and artist is not just about the live event any more.” — *Flash Seats CEO Sam Gerace on the importance of maximizing fan revenue streams through blogs, social networking and digital content.*

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VENUE NEWS



Handheld scanner used by Flash Seats at Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland. The scanner allows fans to transfer tickets to friend's credit card or driver's license.

FLASH SEATS CAPTURES FIRST AND SECOND WITH VERTICAL ALLIANCE ACQUISITION

Flash Seats has made its first foray into the primary ticketing market with its purchase of Dallas-based Vertical Alliance on Oct. 31. Flash Seats — currently embroiled in a legal battle with primary giant Ticketmaster — is billing the Nov. 6 purchase as the convergence of two of the most advanced technologies in ticketing and a means to further monetize the fan experience.

“With the emergence of the connected fan, the relationship between the fan and the team or the fan and artist is not just about the live event any more,” said Flash Seats CEO Sam Gerace.

“Now there are artists' blogs and team social networks. People are connected real time 24/7. It's not just about ticketing. It's about maximizing and monetizing all of the channels to which you can reach the fan.”

Flash Seats allows season-ticket holders to electronically transfer tickets to secondary buyers without ever exchanging a paper ticket. Using the technology, a buyer can purchase a ticket from a season ticket holder and then redeem that ticket by swiping their driver's license or credit card at the turnstile. Flash Seats is partially owned by Cleveland Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert and the National Basketball Association team is Flash Seats' largest client.

Vertical Alliance provides a branded single-source ticketing enablement system for teams and facilities. The software integrates team websites, touch screen box offices, retail kiosks and call centers into a single ticketing database offering targeted ticketing and customer information. The information can be used for direct marketing initiatives and tailored offerings. The company's clients include the Houston Rockets, the Toyota Center in Houston, Boise (Idaho) State University and Texas A&M University, College Station. Gerace said his company will offer both services combined, or a la carte, enabled to fit on the team or artist's web site.

"We don't think either platform should be the attraction," he said.

The deal poises Flash Seats to operate as both a primary and secondary ticket provider in a crowded field of ticketing companies that dominate one sector of the market, but not both. Ticketmaster has launched its own secondary platform called TicketExchange — a system that has caused the company to lock horns with Flash Seats.

StubHub and its parent company have emerged as giants of the secondary marketing and recently signed a deal with Major League Baseball Advanced Media to serve as the league's sole internet secondary provider.

"They're content to sit back and address the market at arm's length and not give benefit to teams, venues, artists and promoters," Gerace said of StubHub.

Gerace said his company does something that neither StubHub nor Ticketmaster do— provide teams and artists with sophisticated marketing data about the purchasing trends of individuals attending their events.

"We have a team here with a great deal of experience which can help people understand and take first steps to maximize their ROI so that over time, they can do more sophisticated campaigns or analyses," Gerace said. "It's about maximizing the lifetime of the fan. We want to monetize them at every channel. Whether it's creating a social network around the artist or venue or team and monetizing the advertising revenue or it's selling digital inventory."

Flash Seats is currently locked in a bitter lawsuit with Ticketmaster as the primary giant attempts to block Flash Seats from powering the Cleveland Cavalier's secondary platform. Flash Seats argues that Ticketmaster is using its clout to unfairly block new technologies, while the primary giant claims that the Cavaliers are trying to breach their contract.

"The Cavaliers' and Flash Seats' lawsuit aims to deflect attention from the fact that the Cavaliers and Ticketmaster fairly negotiated a contract for Ticketmaster to serve as the team's exclusive primary and secondary ticketing company. However, after accepting a large upfront payment from Ticketmaster for these rights, the Cavaliers breached their contract by establishing a ticketing arrangement with another ticketing company, Flash Seats, which not coincidentally is owned and controlled by Cavaliers' ownership," said company CEO Sean Moriarty in a statement released to *Venues Today*. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Sam Gerace, (216) 466-8958

Reliant Astrodome, Houston

FATE OF THE LEGENDARY ASTRODOME HOTLY CONTESTED



Developers want to renovate the Astrodome as a convention center and hotel with amusement elements, but nearby neighbors with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and the Texans NFL team oppose the project.

"The current plan for that thing would cannibalize a tremendous amount of the revenue streams from the 1.8 million people that come through the grounds during our event days," said Leroy Shafer, chief operating officer for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

A \$450 million proposal by the Astrodome Redevelopment Corp. that would put 1,300 hotel rooms in an atrium-style hotel not unlike the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, appears to be under serious consideration by Harris County officials.

"We certainly see some potential benefits in this proposed program and we want to make sure we put every effort into evaluating the program to see if, in fact, it can be done," said Willie Loston, executive director of the Harris County Sports and Convention Corp., which serves as the landlord to the rodeo and the football team.

A county entity called the Commissioners Court will have the final say over whether or not to adopt the plan, Loston said. Right now, he does not expect anything to happen until late January or February, when an assessment will be made whether or not to continue forward with the plan.

RodeoHouston takes place at Reliant Park, also home to Reliant Stadium, the five-year-old, 71,000-seat venue for the Houston Texans and for the concerts performed during the 20-day fair, which in 2008 will be held March 3-22.

Reliant Stadium replaced the adjacent Astrodome, which opened in 1965 and was dubbed "the eighth wonder of the world." Home to the Astros major league baseball team and the Houston Oilers NFL team, the Astrodome no longer served as a venue for those teams after the 1990s. The Astros now play at Minute Maid Park. The Astrodome provided shelter to victims of Hurricane Katrina after the 2005 storm.

Reliant Astrodome, which is managed by SMG along with all Reliant Park facilities, includes one million gross square feet. It can seat 62,000 for football, 54,000 for baseball or 70,000 for concerts and events.

"We turned in a proposal that was a mixed-used development that had a hotel and entertainment but was more heavily oriented toward a theme park," Scott Hanson of the Astrodome Redevelopment Group said. "Through due diligence, within a year after we won the award, we discovered that we needed to modify the plan."

That essentially turned the Astrodome into a hotel/convention center, but while Hanson said that the "theme park elements were essentially removed," he noted that there would be some amusement rides, but that they would be more along the lines of "touring rides for observing the facility, landscaping, trees and streams that we'll put inside."

But rodeo and football officials fear that the new venture would eat into every revenue stream generating profits and, in the rodeo's case, drive away some of the restaurants that serve food during the event. They also worry about traffic and parking issues. The hotel would come with a 2,100-space parking garage, Hanson said.

"We see operational issues," Shafer said. "But we know that operational issues can be solved some way. What we don't see solvable is the financial hit on this charitable operation. The potential is there for us to lose millions of dollars in revenues to the point that what we might lose over the next 30 years would be more than all the scholarships we've given out."

The rodeo has awarded about \$100 million in scholarships in the past 50 years, according to its Web site, www.hlsr.com.

"It has the ability to impact every revenue stream, including food, beverage, merchandise, but it also has the ability to impact sponsorships and our concessions exclusivity," Shafer said. "It can be a major hit for us."

Whether or not the rodeo and football team's leases give those entities veto power over an Astrodome redevelopment plan apparently was under review by Harris County attorney Mike Stafford, according to the *Houston Chronicle*. But Stafford reportedly stated that this was not the case as long as officials' concerns were addressed.

No public money would be used for the plan, both Loston and Hanson said. If the plan does go through, the best-case scenario, said Hanson, would be for a groundbreaking to take place in about a year, with the venue opening three years after that in 2011. Loston does not expect any movement with the plan until the end of January or the beginning of February.

"Even at that point, if there is a positive decision, it will more likely be to continue with the process," Loston said. – Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this story: Leroy Shafer, (832) 667-1000; Willie Loston, (832) 667-1419; Scott Hanson, (979) 393-9104



Jim Tucker; Marla Calico

IAFE'S NEW FAIR COLLEGE WILL TRAVEL TO THE MANAGER-STUDENTS

Nearly six years after former MontanaFair GM Bill Chiesa died, his dream of a college for fair managers has come true.

The plans are a bit different than what Chiesa had envisioned, with managers given the opportunity to take required courses during a four-year period at various meetings of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions and by computer, rather than attending a dedicated school.

"I remember being so excited when Bill Chiesa started talking about this in the late 1990s," said Marla Calico, the former manager of the Ozark Empire Fair in Springfield, Mo. "Our final product is different than what Bill envisioned... But people are hungry for this kind of training. A lot of folks are excited about it."

As the current director of grants and special education at the IAFE headquarters, also located in Springfield, Calico has helped get the program up and running. Although the first classes already have taken place, the program will be launched officially at the 2007 IAFE convention, which takes place Nov. 26-29 at Paris Las Vegas.

The Institute of Fair Management is an academic approach to the wide variety of issues that fair managers need to deal with, including accounting, public relations, agriculture, emergency planning and grounds maintenance.

"One of the things I think is very difficult for the new fair manager or the person applying for a fair position is how in-depth and how many across-the-field subject matters you have to have some comfort with," said Barney Cosner, GM of the Nebraska State Fair, Lincoln, and the Zone 5 Advisory Board member for the Institute. "There is now not a

program at a four-year institution that can cover that. So it becomes incumbent upon the fair industry to help improve that solid base."

For instance, Cosner, a fair manager veteran of the Wyoming State Fair who has an educational doctorate in agricultural education, only recently became the head of a fair with horse racing. "I had no experience with horse racing, and now I'm looking at year-round simulcasting and the expanded staff that comes with that," he said. "Where would you go for that? That's where the IAFE fair institute can fill a void."

The Institute will not replace the Certified Fair Executive designation, which has more to do with service than learning about different areas of the field. However, a manager who has a CFE does not need to take all the same courses as one who does not. "For people who do not have their CFE, there are 23 classes to take in four years," Calico said. "If someone has their CFE, there are 22 courses."

Some of those courses for those two different groups will be the same, while some for the CFEs will be more advanced. Someone without a CFE will take the Level 1 courses while CFEs will take Level 2 courses. Once the non-CFE takes the required Level 1 courses, they can take an additional seven classes to earn the Level 2 designation.

But a subject such as Business Planning 101 is under both tracks. "We think it's extraordinarily valuable for the CFEs to make sure they are up to speed on the basics of running a fair," Calico said. "So no matter what level someone is at, they will take business planning."

Courses will be repeated so that if someone misses a required class, he or she will have the opportunity to take it before the four years are up. There also is no limited enrollment period, allowing anyone into the process at any point.

In addition to the annual convention and the Spring Managers Conference, Zone meetings also will provide an opportunity for managers to take classes. "That's the beauty of this," Calico said. "No matter where you are, you can jump in and take classes, and the courses will cycle through again."

Some of the classes will be conducted by computer, noted IAFE President and CEO Jim Tucker. The student will be given a password to view a PowerPoint presentation, and also will have the opportunity to ask questions on-line. "It's distance learning at its finest," Tucker said.

The IAFE's Web site, www.fairsandexpos.com, features a full list of the courses fair managers will take.

Costs for fair managers to take these classes also will be nominal. After a \$100 enrollment fee, courses might cost \$50. For instance, that is what someone will pay to take the Emergency Planning seminar at the IAFE convention that will count toward course work.

"We determined over a period of time in studying this that we were going to have to provide substantial help if we were going to provide training," Tucker said. The Institute of Fair Management Foundation kicked off fundraising five years ago at the annual convention with a wine function. That Foundation now has \$75,000, which Tucker said was not nearly enough to endow the entire school.

He did not provide a goal that the IAFE wants to achieve in order to fund operations, but he expressed optimism that more money will be raised. "I believe that funds will flow into the Foundation with the introduction of the Institute," he said. – Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this story: Marla Calico and Jim Tucker, (417) 862-5771; Barney Cosner, (402) 474-5371.



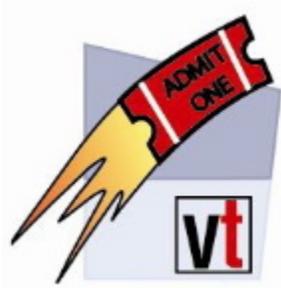
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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

BON JOVI LIVIN' ON A PRAYER AT PRUDENTIAL

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 Oct. 23, 2007. To submit reports, e-mail 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:* \$16,379,070; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Prudential Center, Newark, N.J.**; *Attendance:* 138,322; *Ticket Range:* \$303-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Oct. 25-Nov. 10; *No. of Shows:* 10
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$2,949,650; *Event:* Bruce Springsteen; *Venue:* **Los Angeles Sports Arena**; *Attendance:* 33,122; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$65; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Nederlander Concerts; *Dates:* Oct. 29-30; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$2,581,456; *Event:* Bruce Springsteen; *Venue:* **Oracle Arena, Oakland, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 30,818; *Ticket Range:* \$89-\$55; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Oct. 25-26; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,925,251; *Event:* 21st Annual Bridge School Benefit; *Venue:* **Shoreline Amphitheatre, Mountain View, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 32,895; *Ticket Range:* \$146-\$35.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Oct. 27-28; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$987,992; *Event:* Billy Joel; *Venue:* **General Motors Place, Vancouver, British Columbia**; *Attendance:* 13,922; *Ticket Range:* \$154.12-\$50.69; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Oct. 30; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001-15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$904,926; *Event:* WWE Raw Survivor Series Tour; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 9,548; *Ticket Range:* \$314.45-\$58.40; *Promoter:* Dainty Consolidated Entertainment; *Dates:* Nov. 8; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$782,295; *Event:* Crowded House; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 9,991; *Ticket Range:* \$81.36; *Promoter:* The Frontier Touring Company; *Dates:* Nov. 11; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$709,438; *Event:* The Killers; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 9,671; *Ticket Range:* \$76.41; *Promoter:* The Frontier Touring Company; *Dates:* Nov. 9; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$375,029; *Event:* Ozzy Osbourne; *Venue:* **Veterans Memorial**

Auditorium at Iowa Events Center, Des Moines; Attendance: 8,458; Ticket Range: \$69.75-\$49.75; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Nov. 2; No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$305,126; Event: Blue Man Group; Venue: **Sovereign Bank Arena, Trenton, N.J.;** Attendance: 4,389; Ticket Range: \$87-\$57; Promoter: Emery Entertainment; Dates: Nov. 9; No. of Shows: 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$9,076,420; Event: The Eagles, Dixie Chicks; Venue: **Nokia Theatre L.A. Live;** Attendance: 42,600; Ticket Range: \$265-\$85; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Oct. 18-27; No. of Shows: 6

2) Gross Sales: \$4,694,901; Event: Radio City Christmas Spectacular; Venue: **Radio City Music Hall, New York;** Attendance: 92,439; Ticket Range: \$90-\$40; Promoter: MSG Entertainment; Dates: Nov. 9-12; No. of Shows: 16

3) Gross Sales: \$3,915,102; Event: Cirque du Soleil "Wintuk"; Venue: **The WaMu Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York;** Attendance: 61,393; Ticket Range: \$200-\$30; Promoter: Cirque du Soleil, MSG Entertainment; Dates: Nov. 1-11; No. of Shows: 14

4) Gross Sales: \$369,770; Event: Stevie Wonder; Venue: **Borgata Hotel Casino, Atlantic City, N.J.;** Attendance: 4,416; Ticket Range: \$150-\$65; Promoter: Live Nation, In-house; Dates: Oct. 27-28; No. of Shows: 2

5) Gross Sales: \$256,230; Event: Fall Out Boy; Venue: **New UCF Arena, Orlando, Fla.;** Attendance: 8,694; Ticket Range: \$32; Promoter: In-house; Dates: Nov. 1; No. of Shows: 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$1,356,472; Event: White Christmas; Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta;** Attendance: 28,047; Ticket Range: \$69-\$20; Promoter: Theater of the Stars; Dates: Nov. 6-11; No. of Shows: 8

2) Gross Sales: \$604,734; Event: Morrissey; Venue: **Hammerstein Ballroom, New York;** Attendance: 12,986; Ticket Range: \$63; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Oct. 23-28; No. of Shows: 4

3) Gross Sales: \$462,167; Event: Camelot; Venue: **Civic Center of Greater Des Moines (Iowa);** Attendance: 9,940; Ticket Range: \$60-\$22.50; Promoter: In-house; Dates: Oct. 23-28; No. of Shows: 8

4) Gross Sales: \$379,189; Event: Camelot; Venue: **Wharton Center For Performing Arts, East Lansing, Mich.;** Attendance: 7,972; Ticket Range: \$58-\$25; Promoter: In-house; Dates: Oct. 31-Nov. 4; No. of Shows: 8

5) Gross Sales: \$348,228; Event: Gwen Stefani; Venue: **Santa Barbara (Calif.) Bowl;** Attendance: 4,805; Ticket Range: \$78.50-\$71.50; Promoter: Nederlander; Dates: Nov. 3; No. of Shows: 1

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com



The 2008 Fairs & Festivals Resource Guide is underway

This is our third edition of the Fairs & Festivals Resource Guide and it will be better than ever. Every edition has the most updated information possible and bonus features include such perennial favorites as the Top 50 Fairs in North America, a chart of equestrian center and fairground improvements under construction (all printed in the *Venues Today* magazine) and our unique Talking Points - which illuminates what makes movers and shakers in the industry tick.

New in the 2008 edition (as supplied to Venues Today):

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MARKETING



3D images of the Verizon Wireless Amphitheater in Irvine, Calif. offer viewers an upgraded seating map (left) and a glimpse of their view of the stage

LIVE NATION UPGRADES TO 3D SEAT MAPS FOR ITS AMPHITHEATERS

Live Nation has launched a web initiative to provide 3D maps for its U.S. amphitheatres. The technology enables ticket buyers to locate their seats based on a 3D image of a selected venue and gives concertgoers a chance to preview their view of the stage from their selected seat. The maps can be viewed by visiting livenation.com.

"We've done away with archaic two dimensional seat maps in most of our amphitheatres across the country," said Live Nation's Global Digital President Bryan Perez. "Our new maps provide music fans with a direct link to their seat, wherever it may be in the venue, in just seconds."

Perez said he expects fans to get a "realistic view of each facility and test out different seating options" and their corresponding view of the stage prior to purchasing tickets. Buyers can also make selections for premium seats and VIP boxes. Live Nation has signed on for 3D maps of 36 of its facilities and plans to eventually create maps for all of its U.S. amphitheatres.

The new seating technology is powered by Ballena Technologies of Alameda, Calif. According to company CEO Rich Sherratt, Ballena is currently being used for five Major League Baseball teams, three Major League Soccer clubs, 22 National Basketball Association teams, 10 National Football League franchises and 13 National Hockey League teams. Ballena also has a number of NASCAR clients and speedways.

Sherratt said for each 3D-map, his team makes a site visit and checks that all facility measurements are realistic.

"In most cases we do all the measurements, including the size of the stage, and take pictures and videotape of the entire facility for views," he said.

Ballena hosts the 3D images on their own web servers, although Live Nation has opted to host its own site maps. Sherratt wouldn't say how much his company charges for the

maps, although he did add that each deal includes a software license that includes updates to the maps for changed seating configurations, like concerts — or aesthetic changes like the addition of an upgraded scoreboard or new team colors.

“NASCAR tracks will sometimes contact us prior to reconfiguring their seats. We can provide them with a model to see what the changes would look like,” Sherratt said.

On some of the Ballena seating templates, facilities can build in ticketing systems to sell premium seats to buyers, although the system doesn’t integrate with Ticketmaster, meaning that viewers usually have to run two web browsers when purchasing tickets — one for ordering seats on Ticketmaster and one for previewing the 3D seating model before making the purchase.

Sherratt said the technology is most used by premier seat and group sales staff to walk customers through purchases while making phone sales and giving a client the opportunity to preview seats. Conceivably, Live Nation could incorporate a ticket buying mechanism into the three dimensional maps that allow the viewer to preview their seat location and then buy their tickets within the same browser. Live Nation recently announced plans to develop its own ticketing platform — essentially ending its contract with Ticketmaster by summer of 2008. Company CEO Michael Rapino said the company is interested in creating a unified ticketing buying experience under a single brand.

“Ticketmaster is great but last year we produced over 10,000 shows and dealt with 40 million consumers, and we don’t even know their names,” he said during a September Goldman Sachs investors conference. If we can access them directly there is huge benefit, and we think that we have the technical ability to do the ticketing. If we can control that consumer and sell them directly, we can get more out of each transaction.”

Live Nation’s websites collectively are the second most-visited event websites in the U.S., according to Nielsen/NetRatings. The top visited site is InterActiveCorp, former parent company of Ticketmaster — the seventh highest visited site in the U.S. The company recently spun off the ticketing giant into its own company. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Bryan Perez, (310) 867-7046; Rich Sherratt, (510) 521-0720

CONCESSIONS

The new logo for Pyramid Brewing Company's brewpub at the Rose Quarter, Portland, Ore.

TRAIL BLAZERS TAP INTO POPULARITY OF BREWPUB

The Portland (Ore.) Trail Blazers and the Rose Quarter arena have signed a five-year naming rights agreement with Pyramid Brewing company to develop a branded restaurant in the facility's Garden Club. Pyramid is a microbrewer based in Seattle with breweries dotted along the West Coast.



The value of the sponsorship was not released by the team's Chief Operating Officer Mike Golub, who only revealed that the total cost on the project — renovation, expansion, and rebranding of the spaces' former Garden Club into the new Pyramid Taproom is "north of seven figures."

The official name of the new brewpub is "Pyramid Taproom at Bill Schonely's Place," in recognition of the team's longtime play-by-play announcer. The new

eatery is designed to resemble a Pacific Northwest brewpub, decorated with Trail Blazers memorabilia.

"We knocked down several walls to open the restaurant up to the main concourse," explained Golub. "There will be two circular bars where you can belly up or sit at a table."

The new facility can host about 250 people — the old buffet-style garden club could only accommodate 120 guests. Golub said his team also plans to add 22 high-definition televisions strategically placed throughout the 5,000-square-foot space so there will be "not any seat that doesn't have a good view" of the television screens.

Ovations Food Services, the Blazer's concessionaire and partner in the project, will operate the brewpub and serve mostly Pyramid beer products. The restaurant officially opened its doors on Nov. 7, the team's regular season home opener against the New Orleans Hornets.

Pyramid was founded in 1984 and partially owns and operates five ale houses in Portland, Seattle, Berkeley, Calif; Sacramento, Calif; and Walnut Creek, Calif. MacTarnahan's Taproom, a Pyramid affiliate, has been a Portland fixture for 21 years. The brewery's Seattle site is located across the street from Safeco Field.

The Blazers have also consolidated four suites on the Rose Garden's stage end into a single-game party box. The suites had previously gone unsold for long-term leases and have been reconfigured to accommodate a single party of 100 people, or split in half for two 50-person capacity events.

The space can be rented out for \$150 to \$195 per person and includes food and non-alcoholic drinks, as well as parking and 10 percent merchandising, Golub said.

The addition of the Pyramid is part of a three-year, \$13 million capital improvement project to improve the fan experience at the Rose Garden. Upgrades include a new center-hung high definition video scoreboard, new sound system, a refinished and redesigned basketball floor, upgraded stat boards and auxiliary scoreboards, and a new

Trail Blazers-inspired paint and super graphics scheme in the public concourses. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Mike Golub, (503) 234-9291

GOOD WORKS

NFL PROVIDES GRANTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL TURF UPGRADES

Thanks largely to a \$200,000 grant from the National Football League's Grassroots Program, Lane Technical High School in Chicago received a new artificial football field turf to replace its decades-old grass football field. The grant was part of \$2.4 million in field upgrades that the program awarded this year to community groups in 20 cities around the country.

The NFL Grassroots Program, created in 1998, aims to provide financial and technical assistance to improve the quality, safety and accessibility of community football fields.

Other communities that the NFL Grassroots Program funded during this round are Baltimore; Brooklyn, N.Y.; Dallas; Detroit; Dickson, Tenn.; Durham, N.C.; East St. Louis, Ill.; Hollywood, Fla.; Houston; Indianapolis; Jacksonville, Fla.; Kansas City; Nashville; Newark, N.J.; Phoenix; Providence, R.I.; St. Paul, Minn.; San Diego and Seattle.

Lane Tech's grant was awarded by the Chicago Bears, the NFL, the NFL Players Association and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to Chicago Public Schools. The LISC combines corporate, government and philanthropic resources to help non-profit community development corporations revitalize underserved neighborhoods.

Like many schools that have earned grant money for synthetic field turfs through the NFL Grassroots Program, Lane Tech for years had a grass football field. The new field, unveiled at the beginning of the high school's football season, requires less maintenance.

Grass athletic fields require periods of rest so that the grass can rejuvenate itself, but artificial turf tends to hold up for year-round use. The new field is also expected to be safer, said Calvin Davis, director of sports administration for the Chicago Public Schools.

Stephen Wilkins, project manager for Chicago Public Schools, said, "Students were injured occasionally because of the age of our [grass] field."

The field also is available to the entire Chicago Public Schools system, providing a space for playoff games and other events. Lane Tech has a diverse student body, with 59 percent from low-income households.

The total cost of improvements to the Lane Tech football field was \$600,000, and the \$200,000 grant was a big help, said Marie Goss, chairperson of the Lane Tech Fields of Dreams Committee, a fundraising committee for the high school. "The general community is just thrilled" about the new field, she said.

State grants covered \$40,000, and the remaining costs were covered by the Chicago Public Schools and its partner organizations, including the Lane Tech Football Booster

Club, the Fields of Dreams Committee, the Lane Tech Century Foundation, the Chicago Force and the Chicago Park District.

Since the NFL Grassroots program was formed, it has provided more than \$17 million to help community organizations build or rebuild more than 150 youth fields in more than 40 cities, usually in underserved urban neighborhoods.

A vacant lot of about 38 acres is the future site of the Sports Park for Amateur Recreation in King County (SPARK), Wash. The SPARK facility, a \$12 million dollar project and a visionary outdoor sports venue for youth and amateur sports, will feature five synthetic fields and will be used for youth football, rugby, lacrosse, field hockey and soccer.

Although the ground-breaking process hasn't begun yet at the site, the Northwest Parks Foundation in Woodinville, Wash., is grateful for a \$200,000 NFL Grassroots Program grant that will help kick-start the building process, said Kristen Bush, executive director of the Northwest Parks Foundation, a private non-profit corporation founded in 2002 to address the lack of funding for regional sports fields, recreation facilities and parks.

Bush said that before the building process begins, three dilapidated homes would have to be demolished. She said that the grant is helping the group to improve a difficult area and create a better place.

The SPARK facility is centrally located between Seattle and Tacoma, and it would help serve many areas struggling to provide playfields for their citizens. In the case of Covington (population of 14,000 with nearly 40 percent under age 24), there isn't one city-owned playfield of any type, and the school district fields are insufficient to provide a venue for fostering youth football programs. Also, a 2005 report indicated that more than 30,000 children under 18 are growing up in poverty in South King County.

Besides NFL Grassroots funding, Northwest Parks Foundation raised funds and secured financial support from King County Parks & Recreation and Scarsella Brothers Inc.

Like the Lane Tech community in Chicago, athletes, band members and other community members at Ben Davis High School in Indianapolis have been enjoying a new synthetic field turf that the high school installed after it won a \$200,000 grant from the NFL Grassroots Program. The turf replaced a heavily used grass field.

Mike Kirschner, head football coach at Ben Davis High School, said the grass field got "way overused," with varsity, junior varsity and junior high football programs, band members and others constantly using it. "It takes a beating in the process," he said about the old field.

With the synthetic field turf, though, Kirschner said, "It gets used constantly, but now there's no wear and tear."

Kirschner said that the school's grant proposal highlighted that the school has a largely lower-class and lower middle class community, and he said the new field is a boost for the economics and is "something the community can be proud of."

To get the NFL Grassroots Program rolling each year, the NFL and LISC invite all qualified non-profit organizations in NFL markets to submit proposals for funding. Then the LISC reviews the proposals, asks follow-up questions and visits the sites of organizations that are finalists. The LISC then makes recommendations to the NFL, which then makes final

funding decisions. The LISC and local NFL teams collaborate, and the LISC oversees the flow of funding and ensures that projects move in a timely manner. —Mary Susan Littlepage

Interviewed for this story: Marie Goss, (312) 856-8275; Stephen Wilkins and Calvin Davis, (773) 553-3793; Mike Kirschner, (317) 227-4183; Clare Graff with the NFL, (212) 450-2435; Kristen Bush, (425) 284-0420

SHORT TAKES

Rendering of the convention center at Education City, Doha, Qatar

OGDEN IFC TO OPERATE NEW QATAR CENTER

Qatar Foundation has selected Ogden IFC to operate the under-construction, 161,500-sq.-ft. convention center at Education City in Qatar's capital, Doha. Ogden IFC won the tender for the five-year contract above three other global companies. Paul D'Arcy, who has been general manager of the Perth Convention Exhibition Center for Ogden IFC, is the new general manager on site in Qatar.



The venue is owned by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, founded in 1995 by Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Emir of Qatar.

Contact: Paul D'Arcy, 974 4546001

IAC SPINS OFF TICKETMASTER

InterActiveCorp (IAC) has decided to spin off its Ticketmaster division as a standalone, publicly traded entity. The move comes after IAC recorded a 4.2 percent drop in net income for the quarter

that ends Sept. 30. Despite the drop, the Ticketmaster division actually saw its revenues increase. Ticketmaster said revenues grew 13 percent for the quarter to \$301.3 million, as ticket sales worldwide increased 11 percent. Ticketmaster's operating profit also rose seven percent, according to company reports.

In all, IAC is spinning off four units, Ticketmaster, the shopping network HSN, loan division Lending Tree and travel resource Interval International. The company is retaining many of its popular internet brands, including Ask.com, Match.com, Gifts.com, Citysearch, Evite, CollegeHumor and ShoeBuy.

The move comes at a time when Ticketmaster is fending off increased competition in the primary ticketing arena, and as it continues to slowly ramp up its secondary ticketing options. In addition, the company is preparing for life after Live Nation ends its contract with the primary giant in the summer of 2008.

Contact: Bonnie Poindexter, (310) 360-2321

HOK TO STUDY GEORGIA WORLD CONGRESS CENTER FUTURE

HOK Sport Venue Event was selected to study the future of the Georgia World Congress Center Authority, including the Georgia World Congress Center, the Georgia Dome and Centennial Olympic Park. The master plan will look at the venue holistically, as a campus, versus just the individual elements. The 3.9 million square foot Georgia World Congress Center originally opened in 1976. The Georgia Dome opened in 1992 as the home to the NFL's Atlanta Falcons, seating 71,250 for football and up to 80,000 for special events. Centennial Olympic Park was built for the 1996 Olympic Games and was rededicated as a community gathering place two years later. HOK will prepare a long-range plan for improvement to the GWCC campus, address improvement to help meet current needs of the facility and develop options for operating the facilities with an eye toward enhanced sustainability. HOK also will study potential sites for expansion, renovation or replacement of the Georgia Dome and elements of the Georgia World Congress Center.
Contact: Gina Leo, (816) 329-4409

LONDON LANDMARKS GO GOLD FOR KING TUT AT O2

To kick off opening week celebrations of "Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs," four major London landmarks "turned gold" at 5 p.m. Nov. 11, ahead of the official public opening at The O2 on Nov. 15. Landmarks bathed in gold light this week included The Tower of London, Wellington Arch, The British Airways London Eye and The O2. The London Eye goes gold again Nov. 30. The Tower of London has also partnered with The O2 to offer groups combining a visit to the ancient palace and fortress with a chance to see the royal treasures of the Egyptian boy king. "Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs" is organized by National Geographic, Arts and Exhibitions International and AEG Exhibitions, with cooperation from the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, and sponsored by Credit Suisse. The exhibition includes more than 130 ancient treasures, all of which are 3,000 to 3,500 years old. To date, more than 325,000 tickets for the exhibition have been sold or reserved. The exhibition runs at The O2 from Nov. 15 to Aug. 30, 2008.

Contact: Donna Amato, +44(0)870-9905408

FAIR MANAGER SOUGHT FOR JACKSON, MICH.

With the retirement of Sally Griffis, the Jackson County Fair, Jackson, Mich., is actively seeking a new fair manager for the first time in 50 years. Prior to Griffis' promotion to the job in 1993, Herm Gumper was manager. Griffis is currently earning about \$60,500. The goal is to have a new fair manager by January. The 2008 fair runs Aug. 3-9 and the event draws about 170,000 attendance.

Contact: Sally Griffis, (517) 788-4405

CHINA'S NEWEST PAC OPENS DEC. 22

Beijing's new \$336 million, three-theater National Center for the Performing Arts, formerly known as the National Grand Theater, formally opens Dec. 22 with the China National Symphony Orchestra and the Beijing Symphony Orchestra. Soloist Li Yndi will also perform. The Mariinsky Theater Opera Company, known until 1991 at the Kirov, from St. Petersburg, Russia, will perform Dec. 25. Between Dec. 22 and April 6, 6,000 national and international artists will give 180 performances. These shows are expected to attract 300,000 attendees. More than 20,000 tickets have already been sold for the opening season.

BRIDGESTONE HALFTIME COMING THIS SUPER BOWL

Bridgestone Firestone North American Tire and the National Football League announced the Bridgestone brand as the title sponsor of Super Bowl's XLII and XLII's "Bridgestone Super Bowl Halftime Show." Bridgestone will be the official tire sponsor of both big games. It is already the official tire of the NFL and sponsors the Bridgestone International Series game. Bridgestone will also launch two new 30-second commercials during Super Bowl XLII at University of Phoenix Stadium, home of the Arizona Cardinals. Richard Sports + Entertainment, Dallas, facilitated the sponsorship deal.
Contact: Christine Karbowski, (877) 201-2373

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For more information or to submit listings, e-mail April Parnell, Director of Marketing & Sales at: april@venuestoday.com

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