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Quote of the Week

"Just having all the arena lighted, I think, brings hope to the entire area."

— Marco Perez of Lakefront Arena in New Orleans. The facility reopened 31 months after being critically damaged by Hurricane Katrina.

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Greetings April,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." The NBA and Stanley Cup Playoffs are keeping many of our readers busy, while this week brought racing excitement, and sadness, with the 134th Kentucky Derby. For more information on Venues Today, or to subscribe, visit www.venuestoday.com



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VT NEWS

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

LAKEFRONT ARENA BACK AFTER BRUISING FROM KATRINA

An investment of \$25 million helped revitalize Lakefront Arena in New Orleans after it was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina; (below) wind damage inside the Lakefront Arena from the hurricane.



Marco Perez was having one of those great moments at the end of a successful production. After wrapping up the final performance of the New Orleans debut of "High

SHORT TAKES

>> JAKOB DYLAN'S SUMMER TOUR —

Jakob Dylan announced his first solo tour, which begins in San Francisco at the Café du Nord, May 17-18. Stops incorporate the big summer festivals, including Bonnaroo in Manchester, Tenn., June 15; Rothbury (Mich.) Festival, July 4; Summerfest, Milwaukee, July 6; Newport (R.I.) Folk Festival, Aug. 2; Bumbershoot in Seattle, Aug. 31; and Austin (Texas) City Limits, Sept. 26.

Contact: Kathy Reilly, (646) 328-0688

>> D.C. UNITED PARTNERS WITH VOLKSWAGEN —

D.C. United and Volkswagen of announced a five-year partnership that will see VW's logo on the shirts of the soccer team players. Volkswagen will be prominently featured in other club and in-stadium marketing as well. The new uniforms will be debuted May 8 when D.C. United hosts the Chicago Fire at RFK Stadium.

Contact: Doug Hicks, (202) 587-5448

>> WORLD CONGRESS CENTER REOPENS — All three buildings of the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta are officially opened after 42 days of construction following the tornado of March 14. Over 15,000 attendees attended the Distributive Clubs of America (DECA) International Career Development Conference.

Contact: Christy Petterson, (404) 223-4019

School Musical - The Ice Tour" by Disney at the recently reopened University of New Orleans (UNO) Lakefront Arena, nothing seemed more fitting than to sit back on a bench and admire the facility.

"It was just a great day," said Perez, the facility's building director. "I was sitting there, looking. A lady passed by me. I heard her say, 'How did they ever get this building back alive?' She just seemed in awe. I knew then just how much the people of New Orleans had embraced the opening of the arena."

After more than two-and-a-half years and approximately \$25 million in repairs and construction, Lakefront Arena is no longer a legacy to Hurricane Katrina that tore this area apart when it hit Aug. 29, 2005.

It re-opened on May 2 to much ado. There was a ribbon cutting and local city leaders were on hand. Then, the doors opened to the Disney production, which ran May 2-5.

Now the building is up and it's business as usual as management and staff begin the traditional annual commencements and graduation ceremonies. On June 6, the arena will host Katt Williams; on June 24, Carrie Underwood.

But, the rebuilding of the arena has been a daunting task. Perez remembers very clearly that last day he was there before Katrina. That day he had taken some pictures off the walls, turned out the lights, and shut and padlocked the door.

And, he remembers returning, seeing the devastation. The roof had been ripped off. There were gaping holes in the metal siding. Fire proofing material was everywhere inside. Mold was growing everywhere inside.



Almost immediately, the roof was repaired to protect what was left. Removing the damaged siding wasn't cost effective, so a new layer of metal siding was put on top of the old.

All the walls had to be ripped out on every level because of the mold. Sheet rock had to be replaced.

Between 90-95 percent of the total repair costs were paid for by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The remainder came from the state and there is an "infinitesimal" amount coming from the university.

Tamar Meguerditchian, public relations executive with Keating Mabee, said improvements are up to par with modern architectural fixes.

"You can't completely deck something out on federal money, but you couldn't really replace something that was original to the building," she said. "We received replacement value."

Here is a run-down of repairs:

- A new \$1.5 million state-of-the-art modified bitumen roof system with the highest available roof wind rating of 135 mph was constructed.
- The new ceiling is lighter than the previous roof, which allows production technicians to hang heavier shows in terms of sophisticated lighting and sound equipment.
- The exterior metal fascia and sloped roof panels were replaced at a cost of \$3.5 million.
- All four ramps were re-surfaced.

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- All 8,700 seats were replaced. Perez said earlier this week that the seats did need some tweaking.

"This is a great venue," Merguerditchian said. "The entire neighborhood and community are very excited about it."

The Lakefront Arena is located in the Gentilly neighborhood of New Orleans. Perhaps one reason these neighbors were particularly excited about the opening is that this area was one of the hardest hit neighborhoods in New Orleans. It was the wind, though, not the water that damaged the building.

"Just having all the arena lighted, I think, brings hope to the entire area," Perez said. "It is so exciting. I am so excited."

Perez and other key staffers have remained on site since returning from evacuation after Hurricane Katrina. They would find different corners in the arena for office space, moving it from time to time as repairs were going on.

FEMA had set up a travel trailer city on the grounds. Those trailers housed students, faculty and staff of the University of New Orleans.

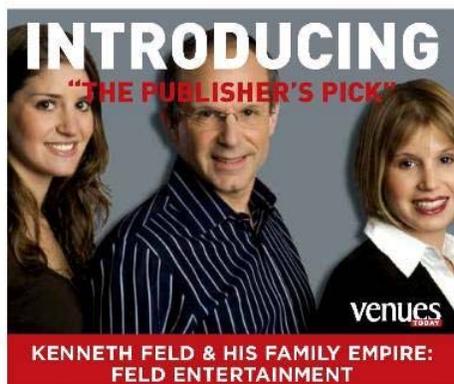
"We were the first university to reopen after the hurricane and I am real proud of that," Perez said.

Perez actually considered living in one of the trailers with his wife and their two children. But, instead, they moved in with his parents. The first floor of his home was totally destroyed.

The opening of the arena is just another milestone in the post-Katrina recovery efforts. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Lakefront Arena, on average, contributed \$1.4 million in revenue annually to the university. It consistently ranked number one among university arenas worldwide.

"But, it has taken so long to complete," Perez said. "I am excited, but, right now, I am really tired." – Pam Sherborne

Interviewed for this story: Marco Perez, (504) 280-7171, Tamar Meguerditchian, (504) 299-7171



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Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park - Ticket System Administrator

COACHELLA AND STAGECOACH ROCK INDIO FOR SIX DAYS

The Big Rig Jig by Brooklyn, N.Y., artist Mike Ross at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. (Photo by VT Pulse)



INDIO, Calif. - The residents of this small desert town on the edge of the Palm Springs got a reprieve after six days of music festivals that drew in crowds as large as 60,000-people a day.

Over 280,000 descended on the city's Empire Polo Fields for two consecutive weekends of festivals produced by AEG Live's Goldenvoice Entertainment. The nine-year-old Coachella

festival, which ran from April 25-27, is a mecca of indie rock and dance music, flanked by mainstream headliners like Jack Johnson, Prince and Roger Waters, with support from groups like Death Cab for Cutie, My Morning Jacket and the Raconteurs. The sophomore Stagecoach Festival, April 30-May 2, drew a mostly country-music centric crowd with headliners The Eagles, Rascal Flatts and Tim McGraw.

Despite their proximity, the two festivals couldn't be any different — besides its smash headliners, Coachella has become a breeding ground for discovering new acts like the Bird and The Bee and Luckyiam, as well as a place for fans to see emerging indie stars like M.I.A. and The Black Lips.

Stagecoach is more of tribute to country music's heroes of times past, with mega-acts like The Judds and Trisha Yearwood sharing set times with the influential Louvin Brothers duo.

"The audience for Stagecoach is much different than Coachella," said promoter Paul Tollett. "The Coachella crowd is looking for new experiences and are really motivated by seeing new bands. Stagecoach is more about connecting with the roots of country music and exposing people to acts that have paved the way for today's bigger bands."

Coachella has also become somewhat of a reunion ground for popular acts, proving Tollett's prowess at bringing together sometimes reluctant artists like last year's Sunday-night headliner Rage Against the Machine, which went on to headline four dates of the hip-hop oriented Rock the Bells Tour, and a spot at Vegoose at Sam Boyd Stadium in Las Vegas. This year's Coachella brought together reunions of indie-rock heroes The Verve and Portishead (who had a Saturday headliner spot that was later pre-empted by Prince), as well as electronic music pioneers Aphex Twins and Kraftwerk.

Although he wouldn't release event grosses, (Coachella reportedly grossed \$16.2 million last year), Tollett said that Coachella presold about 150,000 tickets for the three-day event, mostly as three-day tickets for \$269 single day tickets went for \$90. The Saturday night concert featuring Prince and Portishead was the most crowded affair, hitting the field's 60,000-capacity cap with small armies of scalpers roaming the free parking lots in search of available tickets.

Tollett said that Stagecoach moved about 120,000 tickets with prices slightly cheaper — \$249 for three days and \$95 for a single day.

"If I could, I would bring every one of the 80-year-old guys who are still playing," said Tollett, adding that one of the

The Leonardo, Salt Lake City - Ticket Services/Box Office Manager

[VIEW THE FULL LISTINGS](#)

first acts he confirmed for this year's lineup was Porter Wagoner, who subsequently died last fall.

"These are American treasures and there are not many of them. It's a small club."

Corporate sponsorships were a major force at Coachella. Heineken Beer hosted an indoor igloo, which claimed to sell the coldest beers at Coachella, while Virgin Records sponsored a small festival retail store which sold music of the participating bands. Local radio station Indie 103.1 sponsored the only general admission air-conditioned tent — there was also an "AC Cocktail" lounge for V.I.P. guests. Camel cigarettes sponsored an indoor smoking lounge, while Nokia sponsored a showroom of its newest phones.

Stagecoach featured a 3,000-seat arena for Professional Bull Riders, which hosted qualifier rides for athletes hoping to break onto one of the PBR's national tours, along with a karaoke booth sponsored by Country Music Television.

And, of course, there are always a few hitches at any major festival. Waters ended his first set with an inflatable pig with messages like "Don't be led to the slaughter" written in blood red, and "Obama" with a check-mark next to it. The pig accidentally broke free from its tethers and was the subject of a two-day search that included a reward of \$10,000 and lifetime tickets to Coachella. The search concluded after a pair of Indio neighbors reported finding the deflated two-story pig, shredded but still intact in their front yards. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Paul Tollett, (323) 930-5700



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TICKETS
**EBAY UK PUTS RESTRICTIONS ON CHARITY
 RESALES**

No more freebies on eBay UK. The leading ticket reseller in the UK has pledged to block the posting of tickets to free charity or publicly-funded events, and charge a 20 percent or more forced donation on the resale of tickets to concerts where more than 50 percent of the proceeds going to charity

As the dispute over the reselling of tickets to sporting events and concerts continues to unfold in the British legislature, the pre-emptive move by eBay UK will have its first major impact on the upcoming Big Weekend event from the publicly funded Radio One network. The site has pledged to remove any tickets to the May 10-11 concerts (featuring Madonna, Usher, Fatboy Slim and the Raconteurs) from its site by using filters to ensure that resale of tickets to the free annual concerts do not take place on eBay.

The new policies follow on the heels of eBay UK's partnership with the global Live Earth concerts of 2007, free concerts meant to raise awareness about environmental issues, where the site required sellers to donate a percentage of the final sale price to charity. More than \$60,000 in service fees were raised for Stop Climate Chaos last year through eBay resale of Live Earth tickets.

"I am pleased to announce our plan to roll out similar fundraising initiatives for other major charity concerts on the UK site, and we will also introduce a ban on the sale of tickets for events where all the tickets are free - as we have seen, for example, for various awareness-raising events," said Mark Lewis, managing director for eBay in the UK in a statement.

The Big Weekend tickets were pulled because the event is free and, though it is not a charity event, it is an event sponsored by the BBC, which is a taxpayer-funded organization, according to eBay UK Corporate PR Manager Vanessa Canzini.

"We realized that it's a really powerful platform to enable those charities to make more money," she said of the initiative to enforce a forced giving tax of sorts on resold charity event tickets that ranges from 20 percent at minimum up to 100 percent. "That's more money going to the charities organizing the events and the amount of [charity] concerts coupled with the powerful platform we have to help charities raise money made it a good proposition."

Event organizers will have to contact eBay to notify them that they are putting on a charity event, and provide documentation to show that 50 percent of the proceeds are being donated to charity.

"It's very hard to say how many shows would fall under this bracket, but very few," she said.

So far, eBay's UK competitors have not followed suit on the new charity ticket initiative, though Viagogo founder Eric Baker said he was glad to see eBay following his lead on the free ticket resale ban.

"Viagogo does not allow people to resell free tickets and would not allow it," said Baker. "Our basis for that is the fervent belief that you have a right to resell a ticket that you have bought, but in the case of free tickets, you haven't paid anything. We said that from the get go."

As for the 20 percent charge on charity tickets, Baker reiterated his belief that if a customer has paid for a ticket they are free to do with it what they choose. "If

your charity has already received proceeds from the sale of the ticket, it's bewildering and arbitrary - more than 50 percent, less than 50 percent, deduct 20 percent - in our opinion. We have no intention of following their lead on this. I don't see why we would. It doesn't make sense to us."

The efforts by eBay to send more money to charities from the resale of tickets to events where 50 percent or more of proceeds are earmarked for the cause - those where less than 50 percent go to the charity are not subject to the new policy - was not spurred by any particular event, but was an attempt to minimize the risk of being criticized in the future around the resale of tickets to charity events, Canzini said. In addition to enforcing the 20 percent charity donation rule, eBay has pledged to contribute the same percentage in fees to the involved charity.

eBay UK first put the policy in place in April for a series of concerts by the Teenage Cancer Trust and Canzini said though the charity was reluctant at first to go along with the scheme, after realizing an additional \$40,000-plus in revenue from the resold tickets for the cause, the Trust enthusiastically signed on. "They went from being vehemently against eBay to sheer delight," she said of the Trust. "We've tried to strike a balance between enabling charities to raise funds and allowing people to sell what is theirs," she said. — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Eric Baker, (44) 203-003-6428; Vanessa Canzini, (44) 208-605-3281

HOTTickets

HOT TICKETS is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to VT PULSE. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating capacity category, which took place since April 8, 2008.

RUMBLE PUTS THOMAS & MACK ON TOP

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<p>1) "The Battle of the Planet", Bernard Hopkins vs. Joe Calzaghe Gross Sales: \$11,636,400; Venue: Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas; Attendance: 14,345; Ticket Range: \$1,500-\$250; Promoter: Planet Hollywood; Dates: April 19; No. of Shows: 1</p> <p>2) Kenny Chesney Gross Sales: \$2,577,138; Venue: Williams-Brice Stadium, Columbia, S.C.; Attendance: 46,414; Ticket Range: \$89.50-\$15; Promoter: AEG Live, The Messina Group; Dates: April 26; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>1) Foo Fighters Gross Sales: \$1,984,979; Venue: Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre; Attendance: 21,696; Ticket Range: \$91.49; Promoter: The Frontier Touring Company; Dates: April 29-30; No. of Shows: 2</p> <p>2) Matchbox Twenty Gross Sales: \$1,929,976; Venue: Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre; Attendance: 16,065; Ticket Range: \$399.93-\$110.51; Promoter: Michael Coppel Presents; Dates: April 21-22; No. of Shows: 2</p> <p>3) Def Leppard</p>	<p>1) Katt Williams Gross Sales: \$789,233; Venue: Radio City Music Hall, New York; Attendance: 11,904; Ticket Range: \$84.50-\$49.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: April 11-12; No. of Shows: 2</p> <p>2) Elton John Gross Sales: \$699,755; Venue: Pensacola (Fla.) Civic Center; Attendance: 9,325; Ticket Range: \$90-\$50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: April 25; No. of Shows: 1</p> <p>3) Chris Rock Gross Sales: \$690,095; Venue: Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk,</p>	<p>1) Mamma Mia! Gross Sales: \$1,018,698; Venue: Sacramento (Calif.) Community Theatre; Attendance: 18,803; Ticket Range: \$67.50-\$15; Promoter: California Musical Theatre; Dates: April 16-20; No. of Shows: 8</p> <p>2) Tyler Perry's "The Marriage Counselor" Gross Sales: \$938,812; Venue: Fox Theatre, Atlanta; Attendance: 20,953; Ticket Range: \$51.50-\$41.50; Promoter: Peachez, Inc.; Dates: April 17-20; No. of Shows: 6</p>

- 3) **Jay-Z, Mary J. Blige**
Gross Sales: \$1,883,973; Venue: **Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles**; Attendance: 17,070; Ticket Range: \$350.75-\$39.75; Promoter: Bill Silva Presents, Live Nation; Dates: April 16; No. of Shows: 1
- 4) **Kenny Chesney**
Gross Sales: \$1,661,722; Venue: **Pizza Hut Park, Frisco, Texas**; Attendance: 23,159; Ticket Range: \$82-\$31.75; Promoter: AEG Live, The Messina Group; Dates: May 3; No. of Shows: 1
- 5) **Bruce Springsteen**
Gross Sales: \$1,631,555; Venue: **Philips Arena, Atlanta**; Attendance: 18,922; Ticket Range: \$97-\$67; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: April 25; No. of Shows: 1
- Gross Sales: \$594,565; Venue: **Spokane (Wash.) Arena**; Attendance: 9,908; Ticket Range: \$75-\$35; Promoter: In-House, Live Nation; Dates: April 23; No. of Shows: 1
- 4) **Def Leppard**
Gross Sales: \$572,445; Venue: **The Idaho Center, Nampa**; Attendance: 9,277; Ticket Range: \$75-\$35; Promoter: In-House, Live Nation; Dates: April 22; No. of Shows: 1
- 5) **Katt Williams**
Gross Sales: \$415,366; Venue: **1st Mariner Arena, Baltimore**; Attendance: 8,095; Ticket Range: \$73-\$37.50; Promoter: Live Nation, Up Front Inc.; Dates: April 17; No. of Shows: 1
- Universal City, Calif.**; Attendance: 11,661; Ticket Range: \$75.50-\$45.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: April 23-24; No. of Shows: 2
- 4) **Elton John**
Gross Sales: \$638,059; Venue: **Adams Center, Missoula, Mont.**; Attendance: 7,087; Ticket Range: \$97-\$67; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: April 11; No. of Shows: 1
- 5) **Alicia Keys**
Gross Sales: \$464,078; Venue: **The Liacouras Center, Philadelphia**; Attendance: 5,896; Ticket Range: \$123-\$49; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: April 21; No. of Shows: 1
- 3) **Twelve Angry Men**
Gross Sales: \$767,777; Venue: **Broward Center For The Performing Arts, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.**; Attendance: 16,455; Ticket Range: \$58-\$20; Promoter: Broadway Across America, In-House; Dates: April 22-May 5; No. of Shows: 16
- 4) **Chris Rock**
Gross Sales: \$746,221; Venue: **DAR Constitution Hall, Washington**; Attendance: 13,845; Ticket Range: \$74.50-\$44.50; Promoter: CD Enterprises, Bay Area Productions, Live Nation; Dates: April 18-21; No. of Shows: 4
- 5) **Sweeney Todd**
Gross Sales: \$655,878; Venue: **Keller Auditorium, Portland, Ore.**; Attendance: 15,692; Ticket Range: \$65-\$20; Promoter: Broadway Across America; Dates: April 8-13; No. of Shows: 8

Compiled by Rob Ocampo. To submit reports, e-mail HotTickets@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

THE BEAT

DEAL-MAKERS

AEG ADDS JOBING.COM ARENA; OVATIONS INKS MANAGEMENT-FEE CONTRACT FOR ATLANTIC CITY

AEG Facilities signed a venue services agreement with Jobing.com Arena in Glendale, Ariz. AEG will work directly with the arena staff to increase revenue streams and enhance bookings.

The Terms: Multi-year with multiple incentives, non-exclusive. Sean Saadeh, the arena's executive director of booking, continues in that role, but is now an AEG Facilities employee. Bulk purchasing, sponsorship sales, and marketing are also targeted. It is comparable to similar deals AEG Facilities has announced with Consecro Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, and the Indiana Pacers (VT Pulse, Oct. 17, 2007) and with AT&T Center, San Antonio, and the San Antonio Spurs (VT Pulse, March 5, 2008).

Jobing.com Arena, Glendale, Ariz.



The agreement was reached in late April and announced May 6 by Bob Newman, COO, AEG Facilities, and Jim Foss, senior vice president/general manager, Jobing.com Arena. The 20,000-seat venue is home to the Phoenix Coyotes of the National Hockey League. It opened in 2003. Westgate Village, an adjacent retail, commercial and residential park, is opening in phases and is near completion.

"It's a spectacular organization," Newman said. "We will focus on non-team activity and creating new revenue streams."

Glendale, outside Phoenix, is a major market but the arena also has major competition, from U.S. Airways Arena and the Phoenix Suns, in particular. While AEG Facilities is "building up a network of venues and will keep growing as quickly as we can," according to Newman, Jobing.com is looking for a competitive edge that will drive the bottom line.

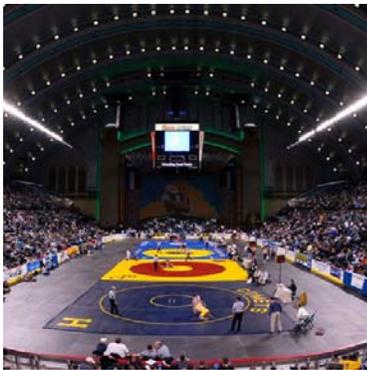
Foss said the first initiative to do so is already underway. AEG Facilities is helping Jobing.com Arena market and sell a new concert package called "Your Exclusive Access." The goal is to sell prime seats to all concert events for the season, starting with Kanye West June 8, Foss said. The sales target is 300 packages and the potential market is the music fan who is not interested in sports and the small business that cannot afford a suite but wants an entertainment option. Buyers are being offered two options, one priced \$6,750, the other \$5,150 per seat. Packages include parking, club access and some complimentary food and drink. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster.

"That's a new revenue stream; we didn't have that yesterday," Foss said. It has, however, been done at other AEG Facilities, including the new Prudential Center, Newark, N.J. Their track record and 'family' access to GMs at other AEG Facilities venues, including Dale Adams at Prudential, is another benefit on this agreement for Foss.

Purchasing power is the other plus, Foss added. He envisions some bulk purchases of equipment and supplies with other AEG Facilities buildings. "We're talking with AEG's purchasing guy about air filters," he said as a for instance. "They may be able to get a better deal."

Historically, the arena hosts 20-25 concerts annually, Foss said.

Collegiate wrestling meet inside Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City, N.J.



Ovations Food Services has signed a five-year contract to provide food and drink for the Atlantic City (N.J.) Convention Center and Boardwalk Hall with the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority.

Transition Date: June 1

The Terms: The Authority will pay Ovations a management fee plus incentives. Points are still being negotiated, but the management fee will be in the \$100,000 range and incentives will be based on meeting hurdles, expense controls, revenue

growth and customer service. The complex generates about \$6 million annually in concessions and catering, the majority of that in the convention center.

Jeff Vasser, executive director of the Convention and Visitors Authority, said this is the first time the contract has been management-fee based rather than profit and loss. "When we went out to bid, we asked for both methods," he said. Bill Caruso was consultant on the process and recommended a look at a management fee deal, Vasser said. In the end, they decided a management fee would give them more control over customer service.

Bidders included Ovations, Centerplate, Aramark and Savor, which is owned by SMG, the private management firm for both venues.

Ken Young, president of Ovations, said the contract was hotly contested and it is a big contract for Ovations. His general manager on site will be Mike Sheehan, who is coming to New Jersey from Sioux Falls, S.D.

One potential revenue enhancement that caught Young's fancy is serving exiting train station customers. There is a train station at the top of the complex, he explained, and riders pass at least one convention center concessions stand when they exit the train. Young envisions turning that stand into a Quiznos and serving the general public as well as convention attendees.

Ovations also plans to brand the venues with its “Everything’s Fresh” approach, add more portables and change the menu.

The Atlantic City Convention Center is 500,000 square feet. Boardwalk Hall seats 14,770. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Bob Newman, (213) 763-5425; Jim Foss, (623) 772-3200; Sean Saadeh, (623) 772-3365; Jeff Vasser, (609) 449-2031; Ken Young, (813) 948-6900 X 104

ON THE MENU

KENTUCKY DERBY, MAY 3 CHURCHILL DOWNS, LOUISVILLE, KY.

Big Brown and jockey Kent Desormeaux were the winner's of this year's Kentucky Derby



CATERING ENTITY: Levy Restaurants

ATTENDANCE: 156,635

The Derby is said to be the most “exciting two minutes in sports,” but for the cooks at Levy Restaurants, the event takes months of preparation to service the general concession stands, along with Churchill Downs’ myriad of restaurants, private suites and the famous Millionaires Row.

“It’s something we spend months getting ready for,” said Bob Majors, Levy Restaurant’s general manager at the famous track. “The actual race itself takes place on Saturday, but the entire week is filled with Derby-events and private parties. We usually get a half-million people through here for the Derby.”

This year, Majors brought on Executive Chef Gil Logan, as well as Executive Sous Chef Jo-Jo Doyle. While their high-end clientele was a major focus, one of the most anticipated dishes this year was a Kentucky favorite that traces its ancestry back to the pioneer days of Daniel Boone.

Burgoo, as it’s known, is a stew served at the Downs’ Paddock Grill, mixing pork, turkey, ham and other meats into a pot with a myriad of vegetables. Legend has it that true burgoo even includes possum, but Majors said that the rodent wasn’t included in the Downs’ brew of stew – the only unusual ingredients were okra and beans.

“It’s like your mom’s spaghetti sauce, everyone has a favorite,” he said.

Concessions: Majors estimates his staff sold 88,000 jumbo shrimp, 25,000 barbeque sandwiches, 142,000 hot dogs, 45,000 cups of beer, 35,000 Derby Pies and 120,000 mint juleps, the official alcoholic libation of the Kentucky Derby, which mixes fresh mint, sugar and bourbon.

Catering: Levy Restaurants operates a number of restaurants and private reception areas, including the Triple Crown Room which can accommodate as many as 600 people, along with the Jockey Club Grand Foyer which hosts 400 people. Levy also hosts the 160-person Stakes Room, the 104-person Aristides Room, along with the private Millionaire Four and Millionaire Six Rooms, which host up to 1,400 people. Levy operates the private, members-only Turf Club restaurant and the Matt Winn dining room, both upscale American restaurants.

Popular menu items this year included the Kentucky Bibb Salad, which serves bibb lettuce over candied pecans, apple cider vinaigrette and sliced strawberries; barbeque shrimp with lemon aioli; and country cassoulet, a baked casserole of black-eyed peas, duck, ham and butter beans.

Interviewed for this article: Bob Majors, (502) 638-3925

NAMING RIGHTS REPORT

QuikTrip Park at Grand Prairie (Texas)

Date: April 17

Terms: 10 years, financial terms not disclosed

Buyer: QuikTrip gas and convenience stores

Tenant/Ownership: Grand Prairie AirHogs (American Association of Professional Baseball)/Grand Prairie Sports Corp.

Comments: QuikTrip, owner of 500 gas and convenience stores in nine states, is putting its name on the new \$20-million home of the Grand Prairie AirHogs. QuikTrip will have a sales booth at the park as part of the deal, something that may be expanded to a full concessions stand stocked with QuikTrip products at convenience store, rather than ballpark, prices.

“We had several suitors for naming rights,” said Mark Schuster, president of the AirHogs. “It was important to find a retail partner who had thousands of people going through its stores, so we could cross promote each other.”

QuikTrip officials understood that success in minor league sports is tied to having bodies in the ballpark, he said. QuikTrip has more than 50 locations in the Dallas-Fort Worth market.

As part of the deal, QuikTrip will get use of the ballpark for one day to hold a company picnic, signage inside and outside, including the video board and the outfield wall, and hospitality in suites, though they will not have a suite near the facility’s planned swimming pool, Schuster said.

The AirHogs split profits - including naming rights revenue - with the city at the end of each season. The 5,445-seat stadium, which opens May 16, features a sports bar, restaurant and cigar bar, along with a swimming pool where fans can beat the heat. The 15,000-square-foot children’s area includes a climbing wall, whiffle ball field and playground. Taxpayers approved a new one-eighth-cent sales tax to fund the stadium last year. The venue will also be used for concerts, festivals and community activities.

Contact: Mark Schuster, (972) 504-9383

United Club - Soldier Field, Chicago

Date Announced: April 11

Terms: A seven-year, multi-million dollar deal

Buyer: United Airlines

Tenant/Ownership/Management: Chicago Bears/Chicago Park District/SMG

Comments: The airline has taken over naming rights of the former Cadillac Club as part of a renewed seven-year deal with the Chicago Bears. United has been a sponsor of the Bears for 40 years, and is one of eight Hall of Fame partners, each of owns sponsorship rights to a piece of Soldier Field.

The 47,000 square-foot, three-level lounge has sweeping views of Lake Michigan, the Chicago skyline and the stadium, and is available to club and executive suite ticket holders, as well as for corporate, social and private events.

The club will feature United’s Rhapsody advertising theme.

“The Chicago Bears are thrilled to take our partnership with United to the next level,” said Chris Hibbs, senior director of Sales and Marketing. “This new relationship is a great example of a prominent, locally based corporation pursuing its marketing and promotional goals through its support of the hometown team.”

Contact: Chris Hibbs, (847) 295-6600

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