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VT PULSE

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Quote of the Week

“This property was valued at \$180 million. Is the governor willing to take 30 cents on the dollar?”

— Steve Chambers of Western Fairs Association on a proposal to sell the OC Fairgrounds in Costa Mesa, Calif. to a private developer following Thursday's auction.

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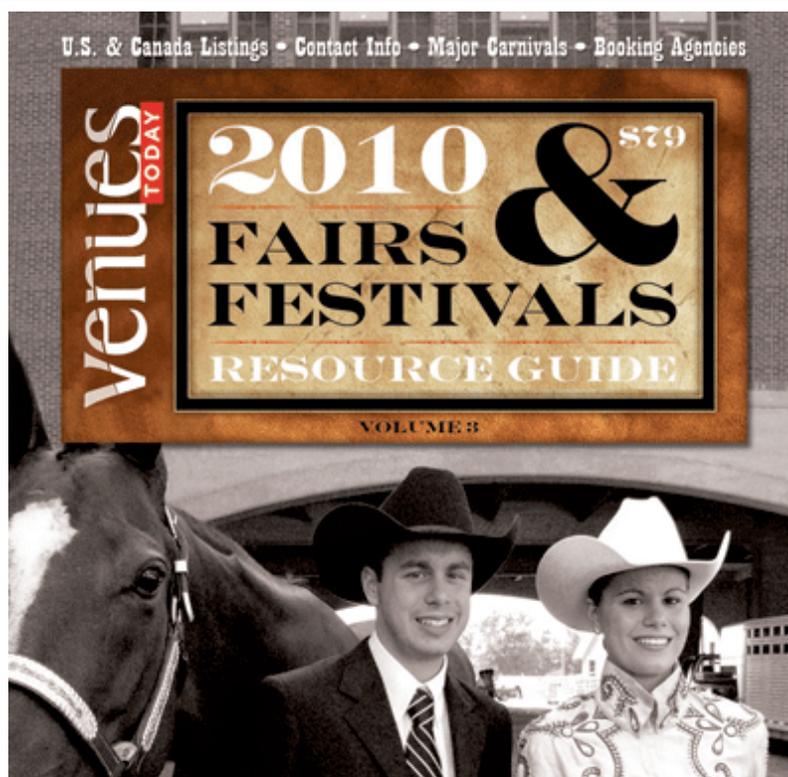
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Greetings,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." Planning to attend INTIX in Toronto? Join *Venues Today* this Tuesday during the opening luncheon. We'll be handing out the 2010 Box Office Stars Awards.



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SHORT TAKES

>> **VIP STATUS** – The BOKCenter and SMG continue to rack up awards, and company officials are thrilled to report being chosen as the Top Movers and Shakers of the Decade by *The Tulsa World*. SMG CEO Wes Westley commented, “When the local community makes the effort to point out your accomplishments, it tends to be a little bit sweeter for the local SMG staff that contributed to the success.”
Contact: Casey Sparks, (918) 894-4250

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VT NEWS

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

GOV ARNIE GETS FINAL SAY ON OC FAIR SALE

Steve Craig, Craig Realty Group, the high bidder, answers questions from the media at the Orange County Fairgrounds auction. (VT Photo)



COSTA MESA, Calif. – Bids ranged from a low, protest amount of \$1,000 to an on-site auction high of \$56.5 million for the 150-plus acre Orange County Fairgrounds here Jan. 14. The California Department of General Services now has to review the offer and is under no obligation to accept the highest bid if it is not in the best interest of the state. From there, Governor Arnold

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Schwarzenegger can accept or block the deal. All RFPs and bid documents are posted on the DGS website, www.dgs.ca.gov.

There is already state legislation in the system to cancel the pending sale, a proposal that unanimously passed in committee prior to the opening of bids, said Steve Chambers, executive director of the Western Fairs Association. WFA supports that legislation and has its lobbyists at work to stop the sale, as are some local residents in Orange County who turned out in force to "Derail the Sale."

It was announced on site that the post-auction process will include reviewing the high bid, and refunding the \$50,000 earnest money all seven bidders submitted.

The original hope was that the Orange County Fair board could form a non-profit to buy the fairgrounds and that group did bid, but all the serious money came from commercial real estate developers, including initial bids of \$55 million from Facilities Management West Inc., \$20 million from Anaheim Sports Holdings, and the original \$42.5 million from Craig Realty Group.

Steve Craig, one of the group of three from Craig Realty Group, said his group wants to enhance the fair, not abolish it. He told the gathered reporters that he understands the economics, that the fair generates about \$30 million and nets about \$5 million. "There are a number of things that can be done to improve it," he said. "We like the use."

Craig Realty Group primarily develops outlet malls, such as the Citadel in Los Angeles.

The DGS Real Estate Services Division, Asset Management Group, announced the next move regarding the sale would be in late March, early April. Meanwhile, the Orange County Fair operates per normal as a state agency preparing for its July 16-Aug. 15, 2010, fair. The 2009 fair drew an attendance of 1,072,000. Steve Beazley, fair manager, said in a e-mail statement: "The OC Fair is proud to have presented one of the top fairs in America. In the event the sale is completed, we hope that the winning bidder plans to ensure the longevity of one of the county's most beloved traditions."

Chambers noted that the concept of selling what the California Governor deemed "surplus properties" has been going on for quite awhile. Last year, the latest version in California called for divestiture of five fairs, included in a long list of state real estate, to ease the state's budget crisis. "Our position was those properties were not surplus, but important locally and to the state's economy. The only thing that changed was that the Orange County Fair board saw this as an opportunity to move into a better operating structure. Their vision was not to sell the fairgrounds but to buy it themselves and get out from under all the hassles that come with being a state agency."

Once the Orange County Fair Board raised its hand and said sell, but with terms and conditions, WFA backed off, but now that they have a bidder not driven by the fair, WFA is back in the fray, supporting the legislation to cancel the sale. Over the past several years, they have successfully fought similar attempts to sell the Cow Palace, home of the Grand National, in San Francisco and also a member fair of WFA.

The governor could veto the bill if it passed, the legislature could override the veto, or the governor could reject the bid altogether as too low. "This property was valued at \$180 million. Is the governor willing to take 30 cents on the dollar?" Chambers asked.

rob@venuestoday.com

HELP WANTED

VIEW THE FULL LISTINGS

Eden Park, New Zealand
-Operations Manager

**Frank Erwin Center,
Austin, Texas** - Technical
Services Manager

**Burnsville Performing Arts
Center, Burnsville, Minn.**
-Executive Director

**Global Spectrum-Comcast
Arena at Everett/Edward
D. Hansen Conf. Center -
Everett, Wash.** - Event
Manager

**Royal Agricultural Society
of NSW, Australia** - Human
Resources Adviser

**The Shoalhaven
Entertainment Centre,
NSW, Australia** - Technical
Coordinator

**The Shoalhaven
Entertainment Centre,
NSW, Australia** - Box Office
Coordinator

**BI-LO Center, Greenville,
S.C.** - Assistant Box Office
Manager

**The Royal Agricultural
Society of NSW, Australia** -
Exhibition Operations
Executive

**Earle Brown Heritage
Center, Brooklyn Center,
Minn.** - General Manager

VIEW THE FULL LISTINGS

Jim Tucker, president of the International Association of Fairs & Expositions, agreed there is no trend to sell fairgrounds, but there is unusual pressure being brought on state legislators in every aspect of government that makes these times unique.

And also in California, the California State Fairgrounds, Sacramento, is in play. A proposal has been put forth that would move Cal Expo to the current 190-acre Arco Arena site, move the Sacramento Kings basketball team to a new downtown arena, and sell the current 360 prime downtown acres currently called Cal Expo for commercial development to fund the entire shuffle. It's one of seven proposals resulting from a Request for Offerings, all equally inventive, but it is the one endorsed by the National Basketball Association.

"I'm not opposed to moving if it makes sense. Cal Expo has moved four times over its life, about every 40-50 years," said Norb Bartosik, CEO of Cal Expo. "We've been at this property for 42-43 years. Now we have infrastructure that works. Taking over the Arco Arena and rehabbing it is a nice idea, but we'd have to look at it." – Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Steve Craig, (949) 224-4100; Steve Chambers, (916) 927-3100; Jim Tucker, (417) 862-5771; Norb Bartosik, (916) 263-3247; Steve Beazley via Robin Wachner RWachner@ocfair.com

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TRAVELOG

TICKET SUMMIT GAINS GROUND WITH NYC CONFAB

Ticket Summit's closing keynote panel included Jeff Kline of Veritix, former Ticketmaster CEO Sean Moriarty and Tickets.com CEO Larry Witherspoon (VT Photos).



NEW YORK - Is Don Vaccaro's Ticket Summit about to have a crossover moment?

The biannual confab of 500 brokers, ticketing professionals and technology firms converged on the Waldorf-Astoria in mid-town Manhattan last week for the event's second New York meeting, and sixth conference overall (summer sessions have been held in Las Vegas since 2006).

While the majority of attendees are independent ticket brokers, Vaccaro has been successful at increasing the number of sports executives, promoters and primary ticketing professionals who attend his events. For teams like the Detroit Pistons or the New York Islanders, the sell to attend Ticket Summit is simple —the conference is a chance for teams to connect with brokers who buy in bulk.

“The summit is much more of a deal-making forum, where you get top promoters, managers, (National Basketball Association) and (National Hockey League) teams,” Vaccaro said. “They’re trying to figure out how to reach brokers who buy billions of dollars of tickets, and make transactions efficient.”

For primary ticketing professionals however, the answer isn't so simple. While the conference continues to program its panels with top executives like CEO Larry Witherspoon for Tickets.com and Jeff Kline, CEO of Veritix, a

disconnect continues to persist for many in the space. Without an audience of box office professionals or executive decision makers, many primary ticketing professionals find themselves asking the same question: what exactly am I doing here?

“While it's not quite there yet, the ticketing industry is certainly heading towards 'one' marketplace and transparency as the delineation between primary and secondary markets becomes less clear,” said Dan DeMato, president of FutureTix, an industry consulting firm which attends Ticket Summit. “Primary sellers now see the need to fully understand what happens to their ticket in its afterlife on the secondary market and to participate to the extent that their consumer acceptance will allow. As the primary market gradually moves away from fixed face-value pricing the marketplace will become more unified.”

One of Ticket Summit's strengths is Vaccaro's ability to draw celebrity-esque primary professionals. In 2007, Vaccaro clinched a keynote appearance from former Ticketmaster chief Fred Rosen, who used the conference to announce his new (albeit short-lived) position at Audienceview. This year, Vaccaro surprised many by booking former Ticketmaster CEO Sean Moriarty to anchor the conference's closing keynote panel. While Moriarty avoided engaging in “armchair quarterbacking” of his former employer, he did offer a few relevant observations. No one from Ticketmaster was registered for this year's confab, according to Vaccaro.

The merger between Live Nation and Ticketmaster will likely go through in some form or another, Moriarty said, drawing agreement from fellow executive panelists Wilson and Kline. As for paperless tickets, a hot topic among brokers who view the technology as a threat to their business, its fate was far less optimistic.

“Limiting the transfer of tickets or notions of trying to control or constrain the natural behavior of a ticket over a life cycle is a strategy that is doomed to failure,” he said. “You're denying your customers options. In a business where you have chronic under-pricing on one hand and large chunks of unsold inventory on another, yet consumers want the product you're putting on the market, it's nuts to deny options to consumers in ways they want.”

Moriarty's appearance was certainly a draw for many in the audience, but Vaccaro admits that Ticket Summit is still far from profitable. Each event costs about \$320,000 to \$400,000 to host, and Vaccaro operates the meetings at a deficit near \$250,000. Getting more participation from teams, promoters and entertainment professionals will be crucial to growing the conference.

“They've done a good job of developing the critical mass,” said Barry Kahn, CEO of Qcue, an Austin, Texas firm that offers dynamic pricing solutions to teams and venues. Kahn said his company's business development efforts aren't in secondary tickets, but noted Ticket Summit has “developed a viable networking scene on the primary side.”

Kahn also said that teams are becoming increasingly sophisticated about how they price their tickets, with added cognition toward secondary pricing on sites like TicketNetwork and Stubhub. For their part, brokers tend to price their tickets based on other brokers, creating a disconnect between pricing and demand.

“By putting everyone in the same room, you start seeing where the inefficiencies exist,” Kahn said. “Ticket Summit does a better job of bringing both sides together than any other conference.”

Kline agreed, adding that many primary providers are starting to look toward

secondary markets for guidance on pricing.

“[Ticket Brokers] have done dynamic pricing longer than the primary market. What’s the ticket worth? The ticket is worth whatever people are willing to pay for it,” he said. “The reason you have lines between the secondary and primary is because people in the primary business haven’t caught on. They’re not aggressive enough and on target enough to set the ticket prices the right way.” – Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Don Vaccaro, (860) 870-3400; Dan Demato, (516) 608-0626; Sean Moriarty, (415) 625-8555; Barry Kahn, (512) 626-5503; Jeff Kline, (216) 466-8055

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OPENINGS

KANSAS ARENA OPENS WITH FANFARE

Grand opening at the Intrust Bank Arena, Wichita, Kan.



The \$206.5 million SMG-managed Intrust Bank Arena in Wichita kicked off its grand opening with a sold-out concert by country music superstar Brad Paisley with Miranda Lambert and Justin Moore on Jan. 9. The concert gross was \$518,129 with 9,665 tickets sold.

Tickets were priced at \$41.75 and \$56.75 for the sold-out concert, which was promoted by Live Nation.

“The opening went very well,” said Jon Petrunak, SMG Sports and Entertainment’s national director of bookings. “A sold-out event is a great way to open a venue. The community came out and supported our grand opening.”

A number of events designed to engage the public were scheduled prior to the grand opening concert. The Royal Flush on Dec. 5 had approximately 300 Boy and Girl Scouts, along with 10 observers and members of the media, pile into the arena’s bathrooms to simultaneously test all the toilets and sinks. The standard operational procedure, which takes about 10 minutes, simulates the worst case scenario.

Chris Presson, arena general manager, said there were no challenges or glitches during the grand opening or the events leading up to it.

Initially, there was some concern with the lack of onsite parking. Arena visitors are dependent on city parking lots, since the venue’s onsite lots are reserved for premium seat holders.

“Several local groups, including the City of Wichita and SMG, worked together as a team to create a comprehensive parking plan for arena events,” Presson said. “A marketing plan, including billboards, bus ads, print and radio advertising and more, was used to inform the public of parking options. As a result, the parking was very painless.”

The 329,950-sq.-ft.-arena includes 40 boxes, 22 suites and 192 club seats, At its largest, the Arena seats 15,500, but it can be configured as a small theater for an audience of 3,500.

SMG’s Savor is overseeing the venue’s foodservice.

Naming rights deals have been confirmed with Naperville, Ill.-based Cessna Aircraft Co. and Wichita’s Spirit AeroSystems. House of Schwan, the facility’s Budweiser distributor, purchased marketing sponsorship rights to one of the

venue's lounges. There also is currently a marketing naming rights deal with Pepsi.

Intrust Bank Arena's current lineup includes Bon Jovi, Elton John and Billy Joel, Taylor Swift, Nickelback, and George Strait and Reba McEntire.

A variety of family shows also is scheduled, such as Sesame Street Live, Monster Trucks and The Harlem Globetrotters.

"Our schedule is very full for our first couple of weeks," Petrunak said. "We're very excited to have a great mix of family entertainment, country, comedy and rock."

The arena also has been chosen to host the women's NCAA first and second round games in March of 2011. This will be the first time Wichita will host a Women's NCAA Basketball tournament, and the first time since 1994 that Wichita will host an NCAA Basketball tournament. — Lisa White

Interviewed for this article: Jon Petrunak, (610) 729-7900; Chris Presson, (316) 250-6444

CORRECTION

In the Jan 13. edition of VT Pulse, a copy-editing error caused us to incorrectly identify Tim McGraw as the artist who announced his retirement in August of last year. It should have read Brooks and Dunn are retiring. We apologize for the error.

HOT Tickets

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 Dec. 29.

TRANS-SIBERIAN TREK CONTINENT WITH THREE SELLOUT DATES

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<p>1) Trans-Siberian Orchestra Gross Sales: \$1,035,881; Venue: American Airlines Center, Dallas; Attendance: 22,897; Ticket Range: \$59.50-\$25; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 30, 2009; No. of Shows: 2</p> <p>2) Trans-Siberian Orchestra Gross Sales: \$1,009,486; Venue: Copps Coliseum, Hamilton, Ontario; Attendance: 19,671;</p>	<p>1) Trans-Siberian Orchestra Gross Sales: \$1,042,455; Venue: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Attendance: 21,933; Ticket Range: \$61-\$25; Promoter: Live Nation, SMG Grand Rapids; Dates: Jan. 2; No. of Shows: 2</p> <p>2) Canadian Figure Skating Championships Gross Sales: \$720,656; Venue: John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario; Attendance: 32,932; Ticket Range:</p>	<p>1) Larry the Cable Guy Gross Sales: \$257,865; Venue: K-Rock Centre, Kingston, Ontario; Attendance: 4,468; Ticket Range: \$57.71; Promoter: DJP, Outback Concerts; Dates: Jan. 9; No. of Shows: 1</p> <p>2) The Wolfe Tones Gross Sales: \$142,347; Venue: Hordern Pavillion, Sydney; Attendance: 2,211; Ticket Range: \$69.40; Promoter: Sham Rock & Roll; Dates: Jan. 16; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>1) Annie Gross Sales: \$719,744; Venue: Fox Theatre, Atlanta; Attendance: 16,649; Ticket Range: \$70-\$25; Promoter: Theater of the Stars; Dates: Jan. 13-17; No. of Shows: 8</p> <p>2) Rain: A Tribute to The Beatles Gross Sales: \$488,264; Venue: Keller Auditorium, Portland, Ore.; Attendance: 12,015; Ticket Range: \$57-\$20; Promoter: Fred Meyer Broadway</p>

Ticket Range: \$62-\$25;
Promoter: Live Nation;
Dates: Dec. 29, 2009;
No. of Shows: 1

3) Widespread Panic
Gross Sales: \$991,633;
Venue: **Philips Arena, Atlanta**; Attendance: 19,255; Ticket Range: \$51.50; Promoter: Bill Bass Concerts; Dates: Dec. 30-31, 2009; No. of Shows: 2

4) Jeff Foxworthy, Bill Engvall and Larry the Cable Guy
Gross Sales: \$838,811;
Venue: **Scotiabank Place, Ottawa**; Attendance: 12,126; Ticket Range: \$79.73-\$50.63; Promoter: Outback Concerts; Dates: Jan. 7; No. of Shows: 1

5) Jeff Foxworthy, Bill Engvall and Larry the Cable Guy
Gross Sales: \$812,279;
Venue: **Air Canada Centre, Toronto**; Attendance: 11,260; Ticket Range: \$79.73-\$50.63; Promoter: Just For Laughs, Outback Concerts; Dates: Jan. 8; No. of Shows: 1

\$43.86-\$7.30;
Promoter: Skate Canada; Dates: Jan. 14-17; No. of Shows: 4

3) Lady Gaga
Gross Sales: \$283,886;
Venue: **UCF Arena, Orlando, Fla.**; Attendance: 6,753; Ticket Range: \$43; Promoter: In-house, Live Nation; Dates: Jan. 3; No. of Shows: 1

3) Hillson United
Gross Sales: \$112,775;
Venue: **Budweiser Events Center, Loveland, Colo.**; Attendance: 4,634; Ticket Range: \$25; Promoter: AEG Live, Transparant Production; Dates: Jan. 6; No. of Shows: 1

4) Jesus Adrian Romero
Gross Sales: \$110,774;
Venue: **Dodge Arena, Hidalgo, Texas**; Attendance: 3,240; Ticket Range: \$52-\$25; Promoter: David Martinez; Dates: Jan. 7; No. of Shows: 1

5) Disney Live Rockin' Road Show
Gross Sales: \$105,139;
Venue: **Event Center at San Jose (Calif.) State Univ.**; Attendance: 2,866; Ticket Range: \$60-\$22; Promoter: Feld Entertainment; Dates: Jan. 9-10; No. of Shows: 4

Across America
Portland; Dates: Dec. 29, 2009-Jan. 3, 2010;
No. of Shows: 8

3) Umphrey's McGee
Gross Sales: \$306,085;
Venue: **Aragon Ballroom, Chicago**; Attendance: 6,484; Ticket Range: \$62.25-\$29.75; Promoter: Jam Productions; Dates: Dec. 30-31, 2009; No. of Shows: 2

4) Mariah Carey
Gross Sales: \$305,940;
Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; Attendance: 2,833; Ticket Range: \$200.75-\$59.75; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Jan. 19; No. of Shows: 1

5) Beauty and the Beast
Gross Sales: \$288,290;
Venue: **Newmark Theatre, Portland, Ore.**; Attendance: 6,520; Ticket Range: \$58.50-\$9; Promoter: Pixie Dust Productions; Dates: Dec. 18, 2009-Jan. 3, 2010; No. of Shows: 12

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

THE BEAT

FACES & PLACES

BENSION JOINS TICKETSNOW; PETRULLO NEWEST AEG EXEC; FRENETTE TO WISCONSIN

Ron Bension



Ron Bension, a 30-year veteran of the industry and former CEO of Tickets.com prior to its sale to Major League Baseball, has signed on as CEO of TicketsNow, the secondary ticket marketplace owned by Ticketmaster.

He said his mission is to help “facilitate the integration of TicketsNow into Ticketmaster, grow the business and help the team focus on technology and new products and work with partners like Ticketmaster and others to drive inventory onto our site and drive traffic to take advantage of the inventory, fulfilling the dream when Ticketmaster bought TicketsNow more than a year ago.”



Ticketmaster and TicketsNow are two separate businesses in two separate areas of ticketing so it takes time to meld, he said. He has seen the effect of secondary sales integrated with primary sales however, in his five years as CEO of Tickets.com.

“Tickets.com was the first to engage in the sale of secondary tickets through a relationship we had with Razorgator,” he said. “We went out to market with a private label secondary market site on our Tickets.com site. We were the first ones out there and everyone said it couldn’t be done and we did it six years ago. There were no hiccups because it was inventory that was unavailable and it filled a need.”

Bension sees the secondary market as filling a need. “Whether you like it or not, people like eBay, Craigslist, and TicketsNow fill a hole and allow people to get tickets to their favorite entertainment venue. It is what it is.”

Bension will work out of the Chicago headquarters of TicketsNow, and will spend time at Ticketmaster in Los Angeles. Prior to joining TicketsNow he spent 25 years at MCA as chairman and CEO of MCA/Universal Studios Recreation Group where he ran Universal Studios; three years at GameWorks as CEO; five at Tickets.com and one year at Sportnet, an action sports web site. He was most recently CEO for ProLink Solutions in Phoenix, Ariz.



Dennis Petrullo

After 12 years at Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Dennis Petrullo has joined AEG Facilities as director of Booking and Event Development in Louisville, Ky. He will oversee bookings for the new 22,000 seat Louisville Arena opening in November, and the 20,000 seat Freedom Hall and 6,000-seat Broadbent Arena at the Kentucky State Fairgrounds.

After Dave Checketts group bought the St. Louis Blues two years ago, Petrullo had been concentrating on booking Scottrade Center as senior VP of business development and entertainment. He enjoys that aspect of the venue business and has the contacts, combined with the AEG clout, to add depth to the Louisville team. “I already had a call from Don King to try to put an event in here,” he said, though the dates weren’t available for a fight.

In his new role, Petrullo will also focus on supporting event programming in other AEG Facilities regional venues, including the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, a 220,000-sq. ft. exhibition hall, 19,000-seat arena, 3,000-seat concert hall and 1,000-seat theater.



Rick Frenette

Rick Frenette has been named executive director of the Wisconsin State Fair, West Allis. He had been executive director of the Utah State Fair, Salt Lake City.

Frenette was born into the fair business working with his dad, Don, who was part owner of the Northern Wisconsin State Fair in Chippewa Falls. The family business was restaurants and concessions. Eventually, the Chippewa Falls event was sold to the county and Frenette moved to fulltime work at the Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul, and then the Ohio State Fair, Columbus.

He is excited to be returning to his home state, where the challenges are to integrate operation of the five-year-old, 200,000-square-foot Wisconsin Exposition Center on the grounds into a viable year-round business and to eliminate the state fair deficit.

Meanwhile, in Salt Lake, Frenette’s assistant GM, Judy Duncombe, will be interim GM while the state completes its strategic planning process. That fair drew 314,000 in 2009. Utah’s lease for the fairgrounds runs out in 2017 and the state is studying its future.

Frenette is a past chairman of the International Association of Fairs & Expositions. He will join the staff of Wisconsin State Fair Park on Feb. 1. – Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Dennis Petrullo, (502) 595-3510; Ron Bension, (815) 444-9800; Rick Frenette, (414) 266-7060

NAMING RIGHTS REPORT



SUN LIFE STADIUM, MIAMI

Date Announced: Jan. 20

Buyer: Sun Life Financial, a Toronto-based financial services firm

Terms: 5 years, at least \$4 million annually

Ownership/Tenant: Stephen M. Ross and H. Wayne Huizenga/Miami Dolphins, Florida Marlins, University of Miami Hurricanes

Brokered: Fenway Sports Group

Comments: Land Shark Stadium, the former Joe Robbie Stadium, home of the upcoming Pro Bowl and Super Bowl XLIV, has yet another name. Sun Life Financial, a

Toronto-based financial services company that offers financial planning, life insurance, health insurance and investments purchased the rights for a reported five years and \$7.5 million annually. The venue will be called Sun Life Stadium.

The deal also includes a philanthropic component, with the establishment of the Sun Life Rising Star Awards program. The company will make a \$200,000 annual donation to the Miami Dolphins Foundation, which will fund four education-based organizations focused on engaging students. In addition, one senior student in each organization will receive a \$5,000 scholarship for college.

Sun Life, a company with 20 million customers in 25 countries, is in the midst of a major marketing push to raise its profile in the United States. They launched their first national branding campaign in the United States two months ago, and signed on as a sponsor of Cirque du Soleil in August. They were also a title sponsor of the Fenway Park "Frozen Fenway" college hockey game. Fenway Sports Group, a company founded by Mike Dee, who is now Dolphins' chief executive officer, assisted with both the Sun Life and the Frozen Fenway deals.

"No one's established a beachhead because of [the number of different names the stadium already has had], so it's not as if we have to fight a 20-year nomenclature of any type that may have existed before," said Wes Thompson, president of Sun Life Financial, in a press conference on Wednesday. "We kind of view that as an advantage for us and we are in this for the long term, per the agreement that we have with the Dolphins."

Contact: Harvey Greene, (954) 452-7000

COMFORT DENTAL AMPITHEATRE, GREENWOOD VILLAGE, COLO.

Date Announced: Jan. 20

Buyer: Comfort Dental, a Colorado-based dental franchise

Terms: 3 years, financial terms not released

Ownership/Management: Museum of Outdoor Arts/Live Nation

Brokered: Locally brokered

Comments: Comfort Dental, the largest dental franchise in America has signed a three-year naming rights deal for the former Fiddler's Green Amphitheatre in Greenwood Village, Colo. The venue will be known as Comfort Dental Amphitheatre. The franchise has 1.5 million patients in five states, including its home base of Colorado.

“When people enjoy the music at Comfort Dental Amphitheatre, that positive feeling carries over to our brand and their next dental visit,” said Neil Norton, vice president for Comfort Dental, in a statement.

The 20-year-old venue can accommodate 17,000 people and hosts approximately 25 major events a year.

Medina said signage and promotions are part of the deal, in addition, the dental company will make a contribution to Special Olympics. — Liz Boardman

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