

stadiaworld

INSIDE

CONSTRUCTION REPORT | VENUE MANAGEMENT | ARCHITECTURE | EVENTS | TECH REPORT | INDUSTRY NEWS



ROIG ARENA

Valencia's New Arena on its Way from New Build to Market Shaper

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Dear readers,

The modern venue is far more than a setting for matchday or show night. It is a flexible platform where architecture, operations, technology and commercial strategy must work together. This connection runs throughout the new issue of stadiaworld INSIDE.

Our cover story takes us to Valencia, where Roig Arena has quickly developed from an ambitious new build into a genuine market shaper. After surpassing its first-year visitor target within only six months, the venue demonstrates how adaptable spaces, premium hospitality, digital infrastructure and neighbourhood integration can establish a new arena in the international market.

At Wembley Stadium, we look at a record concert season, an increasingly diverse event calendar and continued investment in safety, licensed standing, hospitality and the overall guest experience. Further management features examine catering trends across the US major leagues, the growing importance of stadium revenues and infrastructure investment, and the development of Germany's leading venues in the 20 years since the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

The construction section reflects the international scope of the industry. Projects in Spain, Christchurch, Oklahoma City, Calgary and Milan show how stadiums and arenas are increasingly becoming catalysts for wider urban development. Technical reports on integrated lighting concepts, stadium sound and venue management also underline that successful operations depend just as much on reliable systems and careful planning as they do on iconic architecture.

Our event features round out the issue with perspectives on new ticketing models, major international competitions and compact event formats designed for changing audience expectations. Across all these stories, one theme stands out: successful venues must remain adaptable, commercially relevant and closely connected to the cities and communities around them.

We hope you enjoy reading it.

Ganesh Pundt
Editorial manager



ROIG ARENA: A NEW BENCHMARK

A purpose-built multi-use venue for sport, entertainment, hospitality, and business, set to impact the European market.



INTERVIEW: US CATERING TRENDS

Legends and Aramark discuss trends, fan expectations, and innovation in food and beverage.



2006 FIFA WORLD CUP: STADIUM MANAGERS

Venue operators from Berlin, Dortmund and Munich reflect on planning, operations, and lessons from the FIFA World Cup 2006 in Germany.



UEFA: STADIUMS AS CONCERT VENUES

A look at sound design for the Champions League final kick-off show by Kai Zimmermann (UEFA Events SA) and Martin Reich (Audioconsulting AG).



SPAIN: EUROPE'S CON- STRUCTION HOTSPOT?

Driven by the 2030 World Cup and beyond, Spain's venue landscape is gaining momentum, with projects across the country.



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STADIUM TOURS: INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Clubs and operators are constantly expanding their range of offerings, focusing on innovation and creative concepts.



FIFA: CONSISTENT STADIUM STANDARDS

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LIGHTING AS A SYSTEM

From the perimeter to the interior – contemporary lighting concepts for safety, experience and efficient operations.



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Calgary's arena project is set to become both a venue replacement and an anchor for urban development.



CITY FOCUS MILAN: IN TRANSITION

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STUDY: CATERING DRIVES VENUE AIR POLLUTION

Research from Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games shows that fast-food concessions, not traffic, were the main driver of particulate pollution in and around the stadium site. That is the conclusion of a study by the University of Birmingham.

The results show that, particulate (PM2.5 and PM10) concentrations in fan areas around the stadium peaked ahead of the athletics events and opening and closing ceremonies with PM2.5 concentrations up to 10 times higher than at nearby urban background monitoring stations (103.5 micrograms per cubic metre). For a spectator attending a full day of events at Alexander Stadium, this would represent a 125 % increase in their exposure to PM2.5 relative to the urban background.

Cooking aerosols accounted for 71 % of the total PM mass during the athletic sessions. The high particulate concentrations were driven by fast food production at temporary concession stands, leading to a large increase in particulate matter exposure for staff and visitors.

In urban areas in the UK, PM2.5 (particles with a diameter of less than 2.5 µm) are the pollutants with the greatest impact on human health and the economy and, together with nitrogen oxides (NOx), the focus of most national and regional mitigation strategies.

UEFA EXTENDS AND EXPANDS SAFE STANDING TRIAL

Safe Standing will continue to be permitted in UEFA club competitions during the 2026/27 season. The UEFA Executive Committee approved the extension of the programme and expanded the scheme: the ten associations that have participated in the trial to date will be permitted to use standing areas in all UEFA competitions in future. Standing areas will therefore also be permitted for men's and

women's international matches, as well as in qualifying rounds, for example for the UEFA Champions League.

Furthermore, associations that thus far have not participated in the observer programme but have been using standing facilities in their domestic first division for at least the last three years may apply to use standing facilities in all UEFA competitions as from 1st September 2026.

HOK ACQUIRES ROSSETTI TO FORM GLOBAL SPORTS DESIGN PRACTICE

HOK, one of the world's largest and most respected design, architecture, engineering and planning firms, has acquired ROSSETTI, a Detroit-based architecture firm recognised nationally for its sports venue design and renovation work. Together both firms will form one global sports, recreation and en-

tertainment design practice. The combined firm will operate as HOK + ROSSETTI during the integration. The combined HOK + ROSSETTI Sports + Recreation + Entertainment practice will be led by directors Nate Appleman, Shannon Bartch, Amy Chase, John Rhodes, Matt Rossetti and Rashed Singaby.

EUROPEAN ARENAS ASSOCIATION REBRANDS AS ARENAS EUROPE

The European Arenas Association has rebranded as Arenas Europe, "underlining its ambition to strengthen collaboration, education and advocacy across the sector", while expanding its network with new members and initiatives. The new name is announced alongside the addition of three new members: Inalpi

Arena, Turin; MVM Dome, Budapest; and Velomax, Berlin. Together, the rebrand and new member additions signal a more outward-facing chapter for the organisation, with greater emphasis on collaboration, professional development and the role arenas play in the economic, cultural and social life of European cities.



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SPOTLIGHT

UEFA FINANCE AND INVESTMENT REPORT

Picture: Populous

The UEFA report “European Club Finance and Investment Landscape” provides an annual overview of financial and infrastructure indicators in European professional football. stadiaworld examined four key areas.

Europe’s top-division football clubs have reached new financial dimensions. Revenues are rising to record levels, stadiums are becoming more important as revenue platforms, and costs continue to expand.

The 2024 financial year was another record-breaking year: taken together, European top-division football clubs generated record revenue of 28.6 billion euros, compared with 26.8 billion euros in 2023 and 21.2 billion euros in 2021. The main driver of this growth is commercial revenue, which includes sponsorship, kit manufacturer deals, merchandising, stadium sponsorship, non-matchday usage of facilities and membership revenue. English clubs continue to lead the overall revenue ranking, followed by the Bundesliga and LALIGA. At club level, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona stand out, with both clubs setting revenue records in 2025.

Gate revenue also rose to a new record level in 2024. European top-flight clubs generated 4.4 billion euros from ticketing, 33% above pre-pandemic levels and 75% higher than in 2014. The Premier League remains well ahead of the other leagues, with its 20 clubs generating 1.05 billion euros from ticket sales alone. Real Madrid dominates at club level since the completion of the new Estadio Santiago Bernabéu, generating 7.9 million euros per match in gate receipts. Revenue from premium seating and hospitality remains the biggest driver.

The clubs also invested heavily in their future. In 2024, European top-division clubs invested 2.4 billion euros in stadiums and other fixed assets – a record figure. England and Spain, again, saw by far the highest levels of investment. In the Premier League, Everton FC’s new Hill Dickinson Stadium was a major factor, while Real Madrid and FC Barcelona drove investment in Spain through the Bernabéu refurbishment and modernisation of Spotify Camp Nou. Optimising facilities is

important for clubs when it comes to match-day revenue as well as non-match-day uses.

At the same time, the cost side is moving sharply upwards. Europe’s top-flight clubs had 33% more staff in 2024 than they did in 2019, with 93,696 full-time equivalents recorded. Non-player wages increased by 42% between 2021 and 2024 and now amount to 5.2 billion euros. UEFA points out that commercial revenue generation is resource-heavy and costly: servicing partnerships, promoting events and connecting with fans require significantly more staff than broadcast or UEFA revenues.

Operating expenses are also rising steadily. Non-wage operating costs rose by 10% in 2024, outpacing revenue growth for the third consecutive year. They now absorb 36% of club revenue, the highest share for 15 years. UEFA therefore reiterates its view that football by no means has a revenue problem, with annual records continuing and total revenue more than doubling since 2013. Financial problems are nearly always driven by a lack of cost control.

Overall, the report underlines both the strength and the vulnerability of European club football. Commercial activities, stadium operations and hospitality are opening up new revenue potential, while stadium projects show that clubs are investing in their long-term competitiveness. Yet the same growth model also brings higher staffing requirements, higher operating costs and a growing need for financial discipline. ♦

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You can find all four analyses (Record commercial revenues; gate income; investments in stadiums and infrastructure; staff and non-wage operating costs) online at [stadiaworld.com](https://www.stadiaworld.com)



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Roig Arena: new home for Valencia Basket Club.

ROIG ARENA **FROM NEW BUILD TO MARKET SHAPER**

Roig Arena has entered the European market not simply as a new venue, but as a deliberately designed multi-use platform for sport, live entertainment, hospitality and corporate events.

Just six months after opening, the arena had already surpassed one million visitors – a figure originally projected for the end of the first operating year – while hosting nearly 200 sports, music, entertainment and corporate events.

For Valencia, the opening of Roig Arena closes a long-standing gap in the city's event infrastructure. Developed by ERRE Arquitectura in collaboration with HOK and financed through a 400 million euros (469 m USD / 347 m GBP) private investment by businessman Juan Roig, the venue accommodates up to 15,600 spectators for basketball and up to 20,000 for concerts. An integrated auditorium with capacities of up to 2,000 in concert mode further expands the building's operational range.

Originally conceived as the new home of Valencia Basket, the project quickly evolved into a broader venue concept designed to attract international tours, large-scale sporting events and year-round corporate business. "Until now, Valencia lacked a venue of

this scale in terms of capacity, and Roig Arena has filled that gap", Víctor Sendra, Managing Director, explains.

That statement defines the project's role within the Spanish and European venue landscape. Roig Arena is not simply adding inventory to the market; it is enabling event categories and audience volumes that Valencia had previously struggled to accommodate.

Early momentum and positioning Valencia on the touring map

The first months of operation suggest that the arena has entered the market with considerable momentum. Alongside Valencia Basket fixtures, the venue has already hosted the Copa del Rey basketball tournament and secured Project B as a future international basketball property.

On the entertainment side, the calendar has included artists such as Hans Zimmer, Camilo, Roxette, David Bisbal, Il Volo →

“AMONG THE MOST ADVANCED VENUES IN EUROPE”

Víctor Sendra, Managing Director, talks about the arena's goals, its approach to hospitality and dining, and its highlights.



Picture: Roig Arena

How has the arena been received by visitors so far? Are you satisfied with the attendance figures at events to date? What feedback have you received from visitors?

Víctor Sendra

SENDRA: Our first months of operation have clearly exceeded expectations. Initially, we projected reaching one million visitors by the end of our first year, but we surpassed that figure in just six months. The reception has been extremely positive, not only from local audiences in Valencia, but also from visitors coming from across Spain and abroad. We host a very diverse range of events, from large scale mainstream shows to more niche proposals, allowing us to serve different audience profiles. Attendance figures have been very strong across all event types, and the feedback we receive consistently highlights the comfort, accessibility, technological features and overall experience of the venue. At the same time, we actively listen to suggestions and comments from visitors, as continuous improvement is a core part of our philosophy.

The arena hosts sporting events, concerts, cultural events, and corporate events, among other things. How would you define yourselves as a arena?

SENDRA: The two key attributes that define Roig Arena are flexibility and adaptability. One of our major strengths is the speed at which we can transition between formats, thanks to efficient set-up and tear-down processes. We also place great emphasis on listening to promoters, clients, and organizers. Through tools such as our curtain system and modular infrastructure, we can adapt the arena to very specific needs,

whether for concerts, sporting events or corporate gatherings.

The Roig Arena is the largest in Spain and ranks among the top in Europe – in terms of capacity. Where do you position yourselves in the European arena market, and what are your aspirations?

SENDRA: Our goal is to be an active and reliable player within the European arena ecosystem. We aim to position Valencia as a regular stop on major international touring circuits and as a destination city for high-profile sporting competitions. Our intention is not to compete for leadership positioning at any cost, but rather to add value, contribute to the circuit, and build long-term relationships with promoters, artists and leagues.

In the hospitality and VIP sector, you speak of “experience taken to the highest level.” What does the Roig Arena offer in terms of VIP services, how does it stand out from other arenas, and what role does hospitality play in the arena's overall operations?

SENDRA: Hospitality is a strategic pillar of Roig Arena. Our VIP offering goes far beyond traditional premium seating, placing a strong emphasis on comfort, exclusivity, and gastronomy. We provide a range of hospitality formats specifically tailored to concerts and sporting events, seamlessly integrating premium lounges, private boxes, and curated catering experiences into the overall event journey. In total, the arena features private suites, along with several distinctive VIP experiences. Among them is the Johnnie Walker Experience – a glamorous bar inspired by the sophistication of New York private clubs, offering private seating in the stands and a relaxed networking atmosphere that has quickly become a key meeting point within the venue. Another highlight is The Club, a refined gastronomic space designed for guests seeking excep-

tional culinary experiences. Our objective is to create memorable, high-end experiences that enhance the event itself, positioning hospitality as a key driver of both audience satisfaction and commercial performance at Roig Arena.

If you had to choose one feature of the arena that you consider an absolute highlight, what would it be and why?

SENDRA: Technologically, Roig Arena is among the most advanced venues in Europe. We feature the highest-resolution video cube on the continent, the longest indoor video wall in Europe, and an immersive exterior screen that welcomes visitors. Our façade, covered with 8,600 video-illuminated ceramic panels, allows for large-scale videomapping. From a client perspective, however, one of our greatest strength is adaptability – the ability to transform the venue and tailor it precisely to the needs of each event. Another key factor is the sound insulation. Our venue is enveloped in multiple layers of sound-insulating materials, with a total thickness of over one meter. Each layer absorbs different sound frequencies, ensuring optimal sound quality inside the venue while providing excellent acoustic insulation for the surrounding area. From the very beginning, our goal was to integrate seamlessly into the neighbourhood. Therefore, in addition to developing a 21,000-square-meter public park, a parking facility and a public school, we installed four loading dock bays inside the venue. This allows all material loading and unloading operations to take place indoors, minimizing any potential noise impact on the surrounding environment. ♦

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interview online at stadiaworld.



André Rieu, while the LOS40 Music Awards brought artists including Rosalía and Ed Sheeran to the venue. “Our first six months of operation have clearly exceeded expectations,” Sendra says. “Attendance figures have been very strong across all event types.”

Sendra also emphasises that the opening phase has been treated as an operational development process rather than purely a commercial launch. “These months have also allowed us to fine-tune details, optimize operations, and continue improving the overall user experience,” he explains. For new venues, operational adaptability and the speed at which processes stabilise under live-event conditions are often just as important as attendance figures alone.

One of the arena’s central ambitions is to establish Valencia as a regular stop on major international touring circuits. Historically, Spain’s large-scale touring market has been heavily concentrated around Madrid and Barcelona, particularly for international productions requiring high-capacity indoor infrastructure and advanced technical capabilities. Roig Arena is attempting to reposition Valencia within that market by offering both scale and operational flexibility. “Our goal is to be an active and reliable player within the European arena ecosystem,” Sendra states. “We aim to position Valencia as a regular stop on major international touring circuits and as a destination city for high-profile sporting competitions.” Rather than pursuing aggressive market leadership rhetoric, the arena appears focused on becoming a dependable long-term partner for promoters, touring productions and rights holders.

Flexibility, operations and dual-space management

“The two key attributes that define Roig Arena are flexibility and adaptability,” Sendra says. Many arenas make similar claims, but in Valencia the concept appears embedded both architecturally and operationally. One of the venue’s key strengths is the speed at which it can transition between formats, supported by modular infrastructure, adaptable curtain systems and efficient set-up and tear-down procedures.

Commercially, this matters because it lowers turnaround friction for promoters and broadens the range of viable bookings. The arena is positioned neither as a sports venue with occasional concerts nor as a concert hall with sports tenancy, but as a genuinely multi-format operating platform. Equally important is the venue’s collaborative approach toward promoters and clients. “We place great emphasis on listening to promoters, clients, and organizers,” Sendra explains. “We can adapt the arena to very specific needs, whether for concerts, sporting events or corporate gatherings.”

That service-oriented approach reflects a broader shift within the European arena sector. Increasingly, venues compete not simply through infrastructure, but through operational responsiveness and partnership quality. One of the venue’s most distinctive operational features is the integration of the Roig Arena Auditorium into the overall venue ecosystem. With capacities of up to 2,000 for concerts and 750 for conferences, the auditorium enables event formats that would be commercially inefficient in the main bowl. Operationally, however, the concept introduces significant complexity. →

Both spaces are managed by the same operational team. “We have successfully hosted all kinds of combinations – basketball games in the main arena alongside concerts or corporate events in the auditorium,” Sendra explains. The principal challenge lies in visitor circulation and admissions management. “Audiences must never cross paths,” Sendra states, underlining the importance of carefully planned logistics, security coordination and routing strategies.

Guest experience, hospitality and the 365-day venue model

Visitor feedback during the opening phase appears to have been consistently positive. According to the arena, guests frequently highlight the comfort, accessibility, technological features and overall quality of the venue experience. Architecturally, several elements support this positioning. The shoebox-inspired bowl geometry was designed to provide unobstructed sightlines from every seat, while the arena’s external terraces create additional hospitality and circulation areas with panoramic views over Valencia.

This spatial concept gives the venue an identity that extends beyond the event bowl itself. Increasingly, modern arenas are expected to function not only as places to watch events, but as broader social destinations. “At the same time, we actively listen to suggestions and comments from visitors, as continuous improvement is a core part of our philosophy,” Sendra explains. Hospitality plays a central role in the venue’s commercial model. “Hospitality is a strategic pillar of Roig Arena,” Sendra says. The arena’s premium concept extends well beyond traditional VIP seating and combines lounges, suites, gastronomy and network-

ing environments into differentiated event experiences tailored to both concerts and sporting events.

Particularly notable is the Johnnie Walker Experience, conceived as a premium private-club-inspired environment with integrated networking functionality. Another flagship offering is The Club, a gastronomy-focused hospitality space aimed at higher-end business and leisure audiences. For corporate clients in particular, the venue offers more than rental capacity. It provides an environment where networking, branding and entertainment can be integrated into a broader event journey.

That positioning already appears commercially relevant. Within the first six months alone, nearly 60 corporate events attracted around 50,000 attendees. Food and beverage is another area where Roig Arena combines cultural positioning with operational strategy. “Food and beverage are fundamental elements of Spanish culture, and we wanted that to be reflected at Roig Arena,” Sendra explains.

The culinary offer ranges from the public Mercat Roig Arena food hall to Ultramarinos Roig as an all-day concept and Poble Nou, a restaurant focused on Valencian cuisine and wood-fired rice dishes. Importantly, several of these concepts operate beyond event days. This reflects the arena’s wider ambition to function as a year-round destination rather than a building activated only during ticketed events. Operationally, this approach supports non-event-day footfall, strengthens neighbourhood integration and broadens the venue’s commercial relevance.

Within the bowl itself, catering follows a hybrid service model. While in-seat stands focus primarily on drinks and snacks, guests can also access food from the Mercat through app-based pre-ordering. “The advantage is flexibility and crowd

“El Ojo”.



Picture: ERRE+Valencia Dron Works

Exclusive VIP offers.



Picture: Hufon+Crow

management, while ensuring guests never miss key moments of the event,” Sendra says.

Technology, sustainability and neighbourhood integration

Roig Arena positions technology less as spectacle and more as embedded operational infrastructure. The venue features around 1,700 m² of LED screens and more than 500 LCD monitors, including a 300 m² exterior display known as “El Ojo”, a central video cube of more than 250 m² and a large-format screen that can be used in various ways.

According to the venue, the arena features Europe’s highest-resolution video cube and the continent’s longest indoor video wall. Promoters and clients can adapt the systems from “minimal branding to fully immersive visual content”, depending on the requirements of each production. Importantly, the digital ecosystem also supports operational functions. The arena’s Wi-Fi infrastructure was designed to accommodate up to 20,000 simultaneous connections, enabling app-based ordering, mobile ticketing and real-time crowd-flow analytics.

Sustainability at Roig Arena also extends beyond certification language or isolated technical features. According to the Arena, environmental considerations were integrated into the project from the earliest design stages, focusing on passive architectural solutions, energy efficiency and reduced resource consumption. One visible element is the 1 MW photovoltaic installation on the roof, designed to maximise renewable energy usage. Equally significant, however, are the arena’s façade and insulation systems. The building envelope includes multiple sound-insulating layers with a combined thickness of more than one metre, while the façade’s 8,600 ceramic slats help reduce direct solar exposure and improve indoor climate control.

Neighbourhood integration appears to have been a particularly important consideration throughout the development process. “From the very beginning, our goal was to integrate seamlessly into the neighbourhood,” Sendra explains. This approach extends beyond architecture itself. The wider Proyecto Ciudad development also includes a 21,000 m² public park, a school and additional public infrastructure. Operational logistics were likewise designed to minimise impact on surrounding residential areas. All major loading and unloading procedures are handled through internal dock systems within the building envelope, reducing external noise emissions.

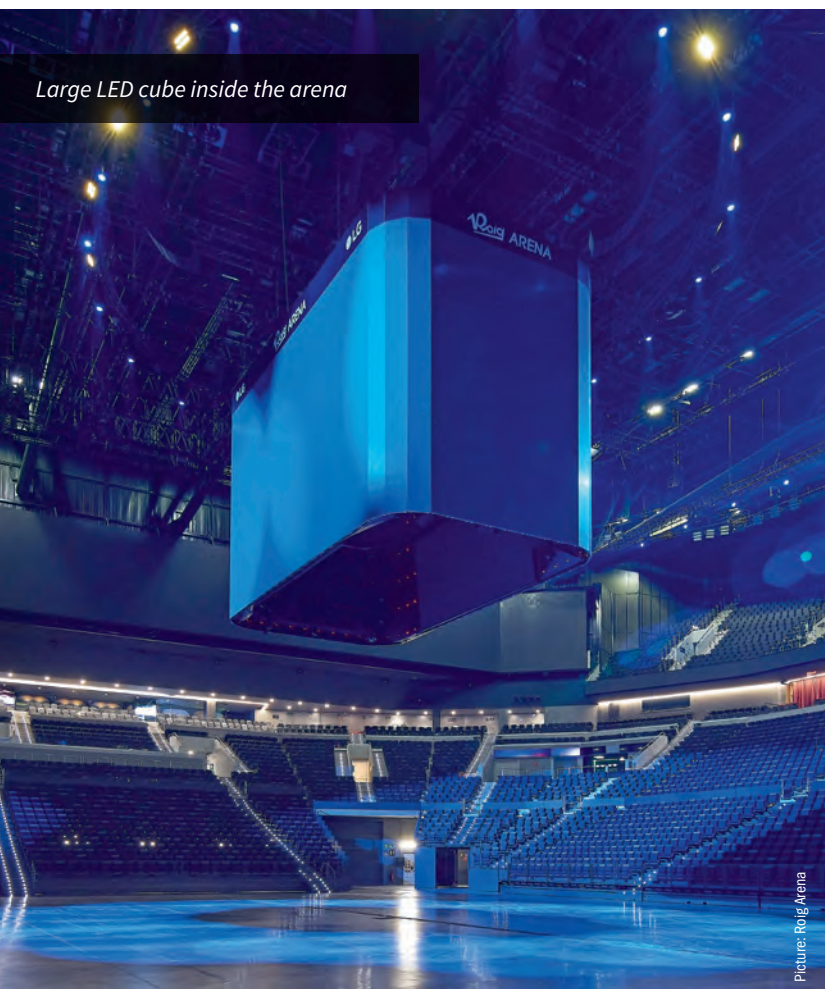
Building long-term relevance

Roig Arena’s market ambition appears ambitious without becoming overstated. Rather than positioning itself through headline superlatives alone, the venue is attempting to establish long-term relevance through operational flexibility, technical capability, hospitality integration and urban compatibility.

The opening phase suggests that the strategy is gaining traction. Strong attendance figures, a rapidly diversified event calendar and the successful integration of sports, entertainment and corporate formats indicate that the arena has entered the market with substantial momentum.

The long-term challenge, however, will be consistency. In the European arena business, sustainable success is rarely determined by opening-year excitement alone. What ultimately matters is the ability to maintain promoter trust, secure repeat touring business, diversify revenue streams and continuously adapt operationally. Roig Arena appears fully aware of that reality. And that may ultimately be one of the venue’s greatest strengths. ♦

Large LED cube inside the arena



Picture: Roig Arena

8,600 ceramic fins wrap the building.



Picture: Hufon+Crow

INTERVIEW

CATERING TRENDS IN US MAJOR LEAGUES

A talk with: Gretchen Beaumarchais, Senior Vice President of Culinary at Legends Global, and Alison Birdwell, President & CEO, Aramark Sports + Entertainment.



Picture: Legends Global

Gretchen
Beaumarchais

You are both active across multiple major leagues and venues. Please briefly outline your current footprint in North American sports and entertainment.

BEAUMARCHAIS: We're proud to deliver the food and beverage experience at over 165 North American venues spanning top-tier stadiums, arenas, theaters, amphitheaters, convention centers, membership clubs, and restaurants. That breadth is what sets us apart. Our presence spans professional sports leagues – the National Football League, Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, and Major League Soccer – as well as major concerts and entertainment events, which means we're constantly learning across markets and bringing the best ideas with us wherever we operate.

On the baseball side alone, our footprint speaks for itself. We manage both general admission and premium experiences for the Los Angeles Angels, Athletics, Toronto Blue Jays, New York Yankees, and George Steinbrenner Field – each one an opportunity to raise the bar for what fans expect from game day dining. That dual focus is intentional, because we believe every fan deserves a memorable culinary moment, whether they're in a suite or grabbing a hot dog on the concourse.



Picture: Aramark Sports + Entertainment

Alison
Birdwell

BIRDWELL: Aramark Sports + Entertainment serves as a leading hospitality partner across North America, supporting more than 150 professional and collegiate venues and welcoming hundreds of millions of guests annually. Our portfolio spans all major U.S. leagues – including the National Football League, Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, and Major League Soccer – as well as Indianapolis 500, NCAA programs, convention centers, and premier entertainment destinations.

In professional sports, we partner with iconic venues such as Fenway Park, Citi Field, Arrowhead Stadium, Lincoln Financial Field, and Frost Bank Center. This scale allows us to bring best practices across venues while tailoring each experience to the team brand and local fan base.

Do you follow different catering strategies across the major leagues? Are there best practices that are successfully transferring across leagues?

BEAUMARCHAIS: Our overall approach is the same across every sport to deliver quality, local, and seasonal products to every fan. That said, our execution does vary depending on the sport, as each one comes with its own time constraints and guest flow patterns.

In the NFL and MLS, pre-game and halftime are our primary service windows, so our teams are highly focused on those moments. In MLB, the dynamic is different. With longer dwell times, fans tend to make more frequent trips to the concessions and bars throughout the game, which shifts our focus toward variety and consistency across a full nine innings.

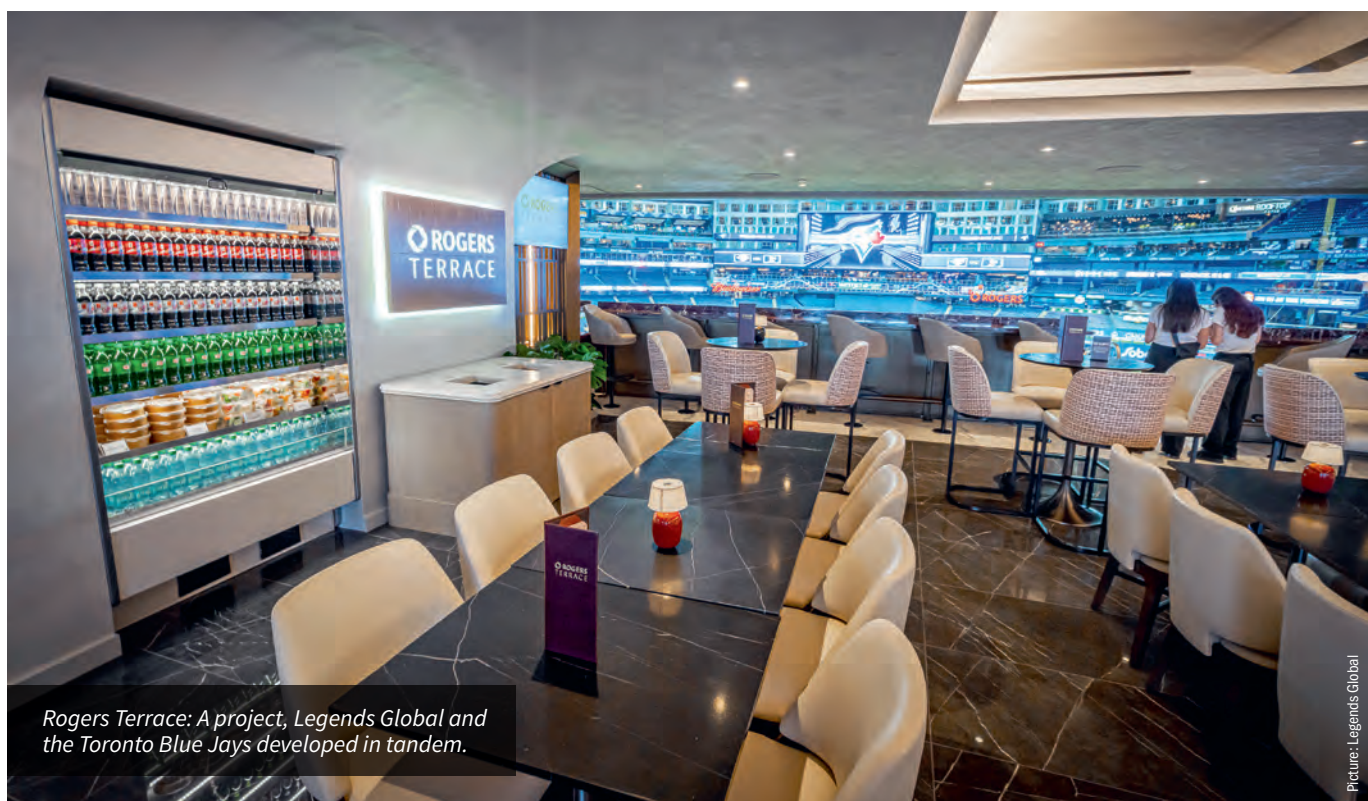
BIRDWELL: Our approach is tailored by the dynamics of each league. NFL venues require high-intensity execution for a limited number of large-scale events, while MLB demands consistency, speed, and menu variety across a long season with frequent repeat visitation. NBA and NHL venues, typically played indoors and often within the same footprint as other sports or events, require more flexible hospitality strategy, one that can adapt to different fan expectations under the same roof while still delivering premium, frictionless service across both general and club spaces.

Across all leagues, several strategies translate well. Local culinary partnerships, modular and flexible concepts, premium program



Picture: Aramark Sports + Entertainment

Self-checkout solutions are becoming more and more common.



Rogers Terrace: A project, Legends Global and the Toronto Blue Jays developed in tandem.

Picture: Legends Global

development, and technology that reduces friction have proven effective regardless of the sport being played. Innovations piloted in one environment are frequently being adapted to other venues, creating a continuous cycle of improvement.

Looking back over the past decade, what have been the most significant changes across the NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL?

BEAUMARCHAIS: The most significant shift has been the evolution of the premium space where fan expectations have risen considerably. Guests arriving in clubs and suites today expect an experience on par with what they'd find at a high-end restaurant or private club, and we've built our programs to meet that standard. Alongside that, there has been a meaningful movement toward seasonal, locally sourced products. We let the quality of those ingredients speak for themselves, because when the sourcing is right, the food tells its own story.

BIRDWELL: Over the past decade, the food and beverage experience has evolved from traditional concessions to curated, immersive dining programs. We continue to elevate offerings for fans, introducing recognisable local and regional brands, restaurant-quality food, and overall menus that authentically reflect the culture of each market, which has transformed food & beverage into a core part of the overall venue experience.

“THE MOST EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES ARE GROUNDED IN A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENT FAN SEGMENTS”

At the same time, technology has become a foundational enabler of this evolution. The adoption of mobile ordering, self-checkout, and frictionless solutions has not only improved speed and convenience but has also allowed us to operate more strategically by using real-time data to optimise menus, inventory, and even staffing. Together, these advancements have reshaped our operations into a more intentional, experience-driven, and sophisticated business.

In your view, how has the role of catering evolved within the broader guest experience strategy of a venue?

BEAUMARCHAIS: Fans come to games and events to create memories with their family, friends, and communities and food is almost always woven into that experience. Our role has grown beyond simply feeding people; we're now an active part of the story they tell when they get home. If we can contribute to a fan leaving the venue feeling like they had the most amazing day, we've done our job. Being even a small but memorable part of that experience is something we take a lot of pride in.

BIRDWELL: Food and beverage has become a central pillar of the overall guest experience. Today, F&B destinations – whether premium clubs, social spaces, or food halls – act as gathering points that extend beyond the game itself. They also play a growing role in activating venues year-round, supporting non-gameday programming and deeper fan engagement. →

Where do you still see the biggest operational challenges in high-capacity venues? How is your company addressing them?

BEAUMARCHAIS: The demand for greater variety continues to top guest surveys and meeting that expectation within the physical constraints of some venues remains one of our biggest operational challenges. We approach each venue on its own terms, finding creative and thoughtful solutions that work within the existing framework. It can absolutely be done; it just requires the right mindset and a willingness to think differently about how we get there.

BIRDWELL: One of the biggest challenges, particularly in some of the industry's older, iconic buildings, is modernising infrastructure to support today's food and beverage expectations. Advancing kitchens, points of service, and back-of-house layouts is critical to delivering a best in class offering, especially during peak moments when speed matters most.

Storage is also an area that can be a challenge. We continue to prioritise smarter space utilisation and design solutions that support our operations.

What infrastructure trends are most critical today? How is the integration of food halls and experiential F&B zones influencing stadium design?

BEAUMARCHAIS: Designing stands and spaces that allow for flexibility is one of the most critical infrastructure trends we're focused on. The ability to pivot menus and concepts based on the event, the season, or guest demand is essential to staying relevant.

*"TRUE HOSPITALITY IS
A LEVEL OF SERVICE
THAT MAKES EVERY
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CREATED JUST FOR
THEM"*

And the good news is that we can produce amazing quality with just a few well-chosen pieces of equipment. The key is proximity: kitchens need to be as close to service areas as possible to protect quality and speed of service.

In the premium space, that principle becomes even more intentional. For suites, we work toward a ratio of one kitchen for every 28 suites, allowing food to be produced in waves that ensure both quality and freshness throughout the event. In premium clubs, a one-to-one kitchen ratio is ideal, given the variety and caliber of dishes guests expect at that tier. Getting that infrastructure right from the start makes everything else possible.

BIRDWELL: Having the right kitchens, pantries, and storage is essential to the success of a best in class food and beverage operation. Across venues, we're seeing increased investment in decentralised kitchens and back of house infrastructure that better supports distinct concepts, premium spaces, suites, and clubs – all an important and necessary shift as food and beverage programs continue to play a more central role in the overall guest experience.

Looking ahead, what will define a best-in-class stadium catering operation in the next 5–10 years? Where should venue operators be investing today to remain competitive over the next decade?

BEAUMARCHAIS: Premium spaces and service will continue to define the standard. Guests arriving in clubs and suites increas-



Social gathering spaces are becoming more and more popular in US stadiums, especially ballparks.

Picture: Avarmark Sports + Entertainment

ingly expect a private club environment not just in the quality of the food, but in every touchpoint of the experience. Venue operators who invest in building and refining that premium infrastructure today will be the ones setting the standard over the next decade.

As our new EVP of Premium Hospitality Experience Pawel Brzezinski puts it, the challenge isn't building the premium spaces anymore, it's making them matter. We are seeing a shift from premium as a space to premium as a strategy, and the real opportunity lies in how you activate it across the entire guest journey and deliver it consistently at scale.

BIRDWELL: Best in class service will be defined by a holistic approach to hospitality, one that considers the full fan journey from arrival to departure and focuses on delivering thoughtful, intentional touchpoints at every stage. Success will come from designing food and beverage experiences that feel immersive, seamless, and authentically connected to both the venue and its market. Ultimately, the goal is to create moments that resonate beyond the event itself, providing experiences that are memorable, personal, and compelling enough to keep fans coming back.

If you had to capture the future of public catering in one sentence for venue executives, what would it be?

BEAUMARCHAIS: The future belongs to operators who focus on premium and understand that true hospitality is a level of service that makes every guest feel like the experience was created just for them.

BIRDWELL: The future is about elevating hospitality across the full fan journey, creating experiences that are not only efficient and high-quality, but genuinely memorable.

Any flagship projects you want to highlight?

BEAUMARCHAIS: The Rogers Terrace at Rogers Centre is a project we're incredibly proud of. The Toronto Blue Jays undertook a massive multi-phase renovation to transform Rogers Centre into a true ballpark, and Legends Global was involved from the start. Our planning division served as the owner's representative on the renovation, while our hospitality team consulted on the new premium clubs and Outfield District. Being part of both the strategic and culinary sides of a project is something we don't take lightly.

What we built at the Rogers Terrace breaks from the traditional premium experience. The space features a private outdoor patio, lounge-style amenities, and a fully all-inclusive culinary program with live stations including sushi, a wood-fire pizza oven, and an ice cream bar alongside a full-service bar. It was designed so that guests never feel separated from the game and always feel taken care of.

The fact that it sold out for the entire 2026 season before the home opener says everything. When you get the product right, fans respond. That's the standard we hold ourselves to, and Rogers Terrace is a great example of what's possible when great partners share that same vision. ◆

***“EACH PROGRAM
IS THOUGHTFULLY
CURATED TO REFLECT
THE IDENTITY OF
THAT VENUE AND ITS
MARKET”***



“We are seeing a shift from premium as a space to premium as a strategy”

Picture: Legends Global

STADIUM MANAGERS ON THE 2006 WORLD CUP

A talk with: Dr. Christian Hockenjos, Director of Organisation at BVB and Managing Director of BVB Stadionmanagement GmbH; Jürgen Muth, Managing Director of Allianz Arena München Stadion GmbH; and Christoph Meyer, Director of Events & Communications and member of the Executive Board of Olympiastadion Berlin GmbH.



Picture: Hendrick Deckers / BVB

Dr. Christian Hockenjos



Picture: Allianz Arena

Jürgen Muth



Picture: Olympiastadion Berlin GmbH

Christoph Meyer

Looking back today – from a professional perspective – on the World Cup and on your stadium in 2006, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

HOCKENJOS: Six football festivals without any unpleasant side effects whatsoever, every match a “happening,” and excellent cooperation between all parties involved: FIFA, the DFB, the local organising committee and the authorities. And – from a slightly different perspective – it felt as though the “Sommermärchen” began here in Dortmund at SIGNAL IDUNA PARK with the Germany versus Poland match and Oliver Neuville’s late winning goal.

MUTH: That we were of course a little more nervous than we are today when hosting a major event such as a Champions League final or a EURO. It was, after all, our first major event. The second thing that has stayed clearly in my memory is that, with the Allianz Arena, we had the advantage of being able to build a completely new stadium on an unused site in accordance with World Cup requirements. My colleagues had a somewhat harder time, as they had to adapt. And the third point is that, looking back, you definitely get the feeling that a great deal has happened in the stadium landscape over the past twenty years.

MEYER: My first memory is: everything was completely new. The State of Berlin and the federal government had just invested 242 million euros (approx. 306m USD / 165m GBP) in the renovation to turn the Olympiastadion into a worthy tournament and final venue. Secondly, I was very impressed at the time by the gigantic temporary infrastructure. Hertha BSC’s press tribune, for example, was expanded from 300 seats to 2,500 seats for the World Cup final. Or the enormous hospitality tents, which also provided space for up to 5,000 journalists.

But the “Sommermärchen” itself then materialised quite suddenly once the tournament had started. That had not really been foreseeable. I still remember well that shortly before the tournament began, surveys among the population showed that 50% of people were somehow indifferent towards the tournament. Fortunately, that changed immediately once the tournament kicked off, so that it really was “a time to make friends.” And – even though I never saw it live myself because I was permanently in the stadium – I fondly look back on the images of the magnificent Fan Mile in Berlin. Those are the impressions that first come to mind.

Today, your stadiums are still among the top addresses in Europe. What have been the key steps over the last 20 years to achieve and maintain this standard?

MEYER: We really stayed on top of things continuously and invested in technology. It is important to note that the State of Berlin owns the stadium, so we don’t have a club that regularly invests in stadium infrastructure. We always depend on major events as a lever, and we have regularly brought those to Berlin. For EURO 2024 alone, 28 million euros were invested in the stadium building. That kind of investment is necessary – not only to meet association requirements, but simply to improve the overall experience. I would say that since 2006, everything has been turned upside down once.

We’ve installed new video screens, added a third one, fitted a new sound system with 170 speakers, completely switched to LED lighting on the roof, and in 2022 rolled out Wi-Fi 6 with over 1,000 access points. Photovoltaic modules were installed on the stadium roof, and full-height turnstiles were installed in 2023. We introduced digital signage and increased the number of toilets in the lower tier by 80%. With new wheelchair spaces and easy-access seats, we’ve really taken a holistic approach, and a great deal has been invested in technology, particularly over the last eight years.

HOCKENJOS: Actually, a great deal has happened at SIGNAL IDUNA PARK over the past 20 years. In addition to investments in safety and the building structure – for example stand reinforcements, concrete refurbishment, and renovation of the roof and roof-support structure – there have also been many further investments in technology and



SIGNAL IDUNA PARK, Dortmund

Picture: stadiaworld

modernisation. Examples include several rows of LED advertising boards, LED floodlighting, various other digitalisation measures, a new access-control system, the West hospitality extension, the Kitchen Tower West, the construction of a new press conference room and club museum, toilet renovations, the modernisation of hospitality areas and, most recently, the new photovoltaic system on the stadium roof – incidentally the largest in the world on a stadium roof – as well as the battery storage solution that will soon go into operation.

MUTH: We are certainly among the leading stadiums in Europe – although I will continue to struggle somewhat with superlatives. That being said, we can flawlessly host any event staged in European football or indeed world football. Even after 20 years, that makes me at least satisfied, perhaps even proud. What have been the biggest changes? Major events always involve the same requirements: safety, media and hospitality. For me, those are the three major pillars, that is where major events differ from a normal Bundesliga match. And in these 20 years since the World Cup, we have invested a great deal in those areas, making it attractive for an organiser to come to us. We have carried out many permanent installations that make it easier for organisers to stage such an event – and above all, to stage it economically.

The key decisions in this area? I will start with something like fixed cabling for cameras. Then there are high-performance mobile networks as well as Wi-Fi, because digitalisation naturally plays a completely different role today. Another aspect is the extremely high demand for electricity, which we can cover very reliably at the Allianz Arena. And then there is the sheer size of the venue, because in 2006 we were more generously equipped with hospitality areas than most stadiums in Germany were and still are. That predestined us to be involved in subsequent championships, whether European Championships or Champions League finals.

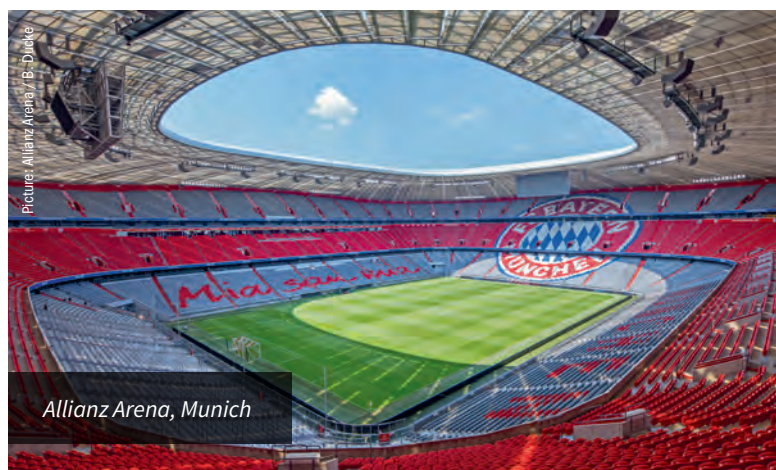
Let's look at the German stadium landscape: How is Germany positioned? What is the situation among the top stadiums?

MEYER: The top stadiums have succeeded well in maintaining the highest level. Of course, the more money that was available at the respective locations, the better. But the stadiums themselves are unique. Each stadium has a completely different structure, partly different technologies, also in the field of energy and in terms of design and routing. You cannot generalise.

If I had to name trends that have taken place in stadiums, I would say there has always been further development and expansion of VIP, media and hospitality areas. Another major topic has been the switch to LED, both throughout the building as a whole and especially for floodlighting. Most stadiums have also carried out updates to safety and access systems. As mentioned, the topic of refurbishment measures has to be considered separately, and there is probably more catching up to do at one location than at another, because different priorities have been set.

HOCKENJOS: The situation in Germany has continued to improve since 2006. The 12 World Cup stadiums from that time have largely implemented technological progress. In addition – and this is also an important consequence of the 2006 World Cup – there were numerous new stadium builds and modernisation projects at venues other than the World Cup stadiums in the aftermath of the “Sommermärchen”.

MUTH: Significantly better. Because these developments aren't confined to the top-tier stadiums; rather, we're seeing top-class stadiums being built even in the second or third divisions. Nobody in



professional football can avoid this development, because they simply have to offer these amenities I mentioned earlier: hospitality, comfort, digitalisation, LED and sustainability – because fans expect them.

And in a European comparison: whether we look at England or France – it becomes even easier for us when we look at Italy – we are at a very, very high level. Even compared to England, where some clubs do not have to watch every euro, we compete very well. And if we are honest: in Spain there are three stadiums – Atlético, Real and soon Barcelona – but after that, a certain drop-off can be observed.

In Germany, the breadth is simply at a very high level. And then there may be one or two that are a little higher still, and hopefully we are among them. Because in our case, the requirements are even higher due to the European competitions than they are for some others who do not have to expect European competition or perhaps also have no chance of hosting a European Championship. ♦

stadiaworld+

Dr Christian Hockenjos, Christoph Meyer and Jürgen Muth have each played a key role in the development of their respective stadiums since 2006. To mark the 20th anniversary, stadiaworld sat down with them to look back on the tournament, the German stadium landscape and the most significant developments. You can find the three interviews online at stadiaworld.com

CLICK
HERE





Picture: Oak View Group

KATIE HAREL NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR AT OVG HOSPITALITY

Oak View Group has promoted Katie Harel to Managing Director of OVG Hospitality, tasking her with driving the next phase of growth for the business in the UK. Based in London and reporting to Ken Gaber, President of OVG Hospitality, Harel will lead the strategic and creative direction of the UK operation, including commercial growth, brand positioning, partnerships, new business and operational excellence.

Harel has served as VP of Marketing at OVG International since 2024 and brings more than 20 years of hospitality experience, including over a decade at Rhubarb Hospitality Collection. Rhubarb was acquired by OVG in 2023, and Harel will continue to oversee its strategic marketing

to ensure alignment with OVG Hospitality. In her expanded role, she will shape a cohesive strategy across marketing, operations and business development, with a focus on guest experience and sustainable revenue growth.

The promotion comes as OVG Hospitality expands across the UK and Europe. The business already operates food and beverage services at Co-op Live in Manchester, the UK's largest indoor arena, and works with City Football Group at the Etihad Stadium and other leading football venues. OVG says Harel's expertise, vision and creative approach will support its partnerships and strengthen its position in sports and entertainment hospitality.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES AT AMBSE

AMB Sports and Entertainment has announced that COO Dietmar Exler will retire on after seven years with the Blank Family of Businesses. Since joining in 2019, Exler led operations at Mercedes-Benz Stadium and also served as CEO of the Arthur M. Blank Family Office from 2020 to 2025. His tenure included major milestones such as the stadium becoming the first in the world to achieve TRUE Platinum Certification for Zero Waste, serving as an early voting site, operating a major COVID-19 vaccination centre, and hosting Copa America, the FIFA Club World Cup and the FIFA World Cup.

As part of a leadership realignment from August 2026, Tameka Rish has been promoted to executive vice president and COO of AMBSE, adding stadium operations and food and beverage to her remit. Doug Roberts becomes senior vice president, stadium revenue and events, overseeing the full event lifecycle from sales and booking to execution. Joe Coomer is promoted to senior vice president, security and guest experience, combining key venue safety and fan-facing functions. All three will report to AMBSE President Tim Zulawski.



Picture: WOO architects

PHILIP JOHNSON JOINS WOO AS A DIRECTOR

WOO architects has appointed Philip Johnson as a Director, strengthening its position in the sports and entertainment venue market. Joining from Populous, where he was a Senior Principal, Johnson brings more than 25 years' experience in architecture and masterplanning. His portfolio includes Fulham FC's Riverside Stand, Lord's, Coca-Cola Arena, Ascot Racecourse and London's Olympic Stadium. He will support WOO's next phase of international growth across major event, venue and urban development projects globally.

HOK UK: NEW REGIONAL SPORTS LEADER

HOK has appointed Kirsty Mitchell as regional leader of Sports + Recreation + Entertainment in its London studio. With more than 20 years' experience in the sports sector, Mitchell will work with Director John Rhodes to strengthen HOK's sports practice. Her portfolio spans masterplans, convention centres, stadium and arena renovations and new builds, while her work also explores women's sports venues, fan experience, technology, hospitality and inclusive design.



GENSLER: NEW SPORTS LEADER FOR APME-REGION

Gensler's Sports & Entertainment has appointed Elliott Pears as Regional Sports Leader for Asia Pacific and the Middle East, supporting the firm's expansion in key sports and entertainment markets. The Australian-born architect returns home to lead the regional Sports & Entertainment Practice, combining global experience with local insight. Managing Director Lisa Munao said Pears' leadership will strengthen Gensler's ability to deliver venues that engage communities and create lasting value.

Pears brings more than 15 years of experience across stadiums, arenas and large-scale masterplans, with work spanning all five major U.S. sports leagues and major European football leagues. Licensed

in both the U.S. and Australia, he has led projects including Live Nation's Lima Arena in Peru and the Charlotte Music Venue in the U.S., focusing on flexible spaces that operate year-round.

The appointment comes as sports infrastructure across Asia Pacific and the Middle East enters a new investment phase. India is upgrading legacy stadiums and developing multi-use venues, China and Southeast Asia are driving demand for arenas and training facilities, and the Middle East is using sports precincts as anchors for tourism and mixed-use development. Gensler says Pears will help deliver precinct-scale projects that create lasting value for athletes, fans and communities.

STONE JOINS TSE AS NEW GM

Tepper Sports & Entertainment has appointed Jason Stone as general manager of stadium and venue operations. Reporting to CEO Kristi Coleman, Stone will oversee operations for Carolina Panthers games, Charlotte FC matches and all other events at Bank of America Stadium, plus TSE venues including Atrium Health Performance Park and the Atrium Health Training Facility.

Stone joins from Kraft Sports & Entertainment, where he was vice president of stadium and site operations. He led operations for Gillette Stadium and its mixed-use campus, covering facilities, guest services, event op-

erations, parking, transportation, broadcast operations and sustainability. His experience includes NFL and MLS games, major concerts, the Army-Navy Game and the NHL Winter Classic, along with modernization projects and year-round programming.

TSE says Stone's expertise will support efforts to improve fan experience and grow events at Bank of America Stadium after renovation. Earlier, he held multiple stadium operations roles at Kraft Sports & Entertainment and served as director of security for the Kansas City Chiefs, building more than two decades of experience in venue leadership.



OVG APPOINTS NEW CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER

Oak View Group has appointed Shazmah Hakim as Chief Legal Officer, adding legal expertise as its venue development, management, hospitality and sponsorship platforms expand globally. Hakim joins from Remington Lodging and Hospitality and will be based in Denver, reporting to CEO Chris Granger. As general counsel, she will oversee OVG's corporate legal team and advise on governance, compliance, risk, regulation, M&A, IP, employment, ethics, ESG and CSR, supporting global growth in Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

ARAMCO STADIUM COMPANY LAUNCHED

Aramco Stadium Company has launched with its first board and CEO appointments, advancing a major Saudi Vision 2030 sports project. Fahad Al Dhubaib becomes chairman, Mohammed Al Thomairi vice chairman, and Matthew Kittle CEO. Opening later in 2026 in Al-Khobar, the 47,000-seat, air-conditioned Aramco Stadium will be home to Al-Qadsiah FC and part of an 800,000 m² campus with parks, hospitality and community facilities, set to host AFC Asian Cup 2027 and FIFA World Cup 2034 events

EXPANSION PLANS OF US MAJOR LEAGUES

THREE LEAGUES, THREE DIFFERENT STAGES

The NHL, NBA and MLB are all exploring expansion, but at different speeds. From new arenas in Texas to ambitions in Seattle and Las Vegas and a crowded MLB candidate field. *stadiaworld* takes a brief overview of the leagues' plans.

Expansion is once again a relevant strategic topic across the major North American professional leagues. The National Hockey League (NHL), National Basketball Association (NBA) and Major League Baseball (MLB) are each approaching the issue from different procedural stages, but the central evaluation criteria are broadly comparable: ownership strength, market fundamentals, venue infrastructure, financing capacity and the long-term impact on the league.

The NHL is the furthest along in this process. In late June 2026, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman announced following a meeting of the Board of Governors (BOG) that the league would begin a six-month process to evaluate a potential expansion into Texas. Discussions are underway with the Friedkin family – led by Dan Friedkin, CEO of the Friedkin Group and owner of Everton FC as well as AS Roma –, as the prospective owner of the Texas expansion franchise. The exploration phase will determine which market,

Houston or Austin, is best suited for an NHL team. Both cities would require a new arena, Bettman said.

The Friedkin family would invest about 3.5 billion US dollar, including the expansion fee that goes to the NHL and the cost of building a new arena.

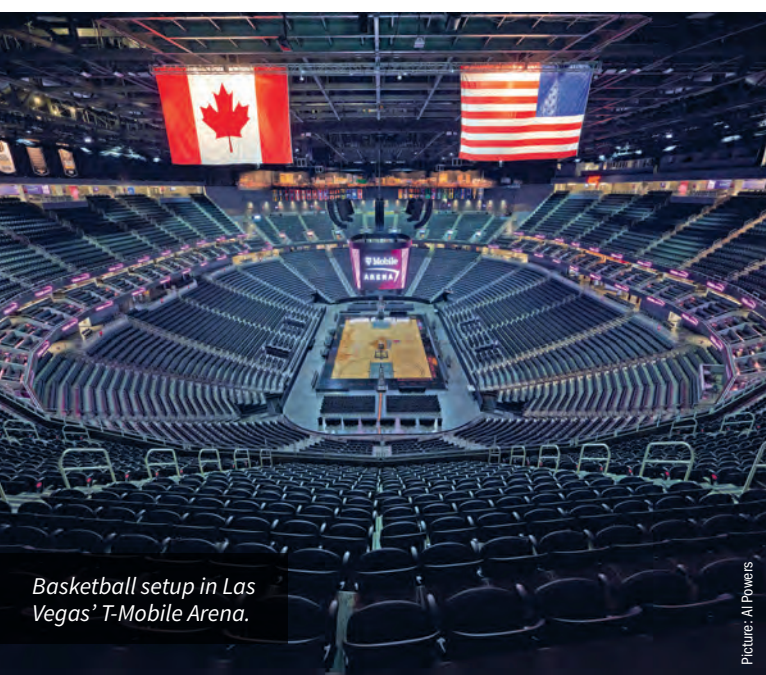
“We have been in discussions for the better part of two years with the Friedkin family, principally for the last two years about Houston as an expansion opportunity,” Commissioner Bettman said. “But as we continued to focus with them, particularly on the need for a new arena in Houston, the discussions morphed into also a discussion about Austin, which would also need a new building. But we are going to work together under the terms, a term sheet that we were able to agree upon, in terms of a framework to consider what makes the most sense moving forward.”

Bettman added that the BOG also had discussions about the possibility of Atlanta and Arizona as expansion markets, but the Friedkin family's pursuit of a team in Texas is the furthest along, he said. “We're in lots of discussions, but they've got to progress to a certain level before you create a framework to actually see if it's something that's going to work,” Commissioner Bettman said. “That doesn't rule in or rule out Atlanta or Arizona, it simply means they're on a slightly different track. Tomorrow we could all wake up and they say, ‘You know what, that looks so good we want to do the same thing.’”

The new franchise would be the 33rd. The NHL has been a 32-team league since 2021-22, when the Seattle Kraken made their debut. Seattle was unanimously approved as the League's 32nd franchise at the BOG meeting on Dec. 4, 2018, with an expansion fee set at 650 million US dollar.

Seattle is also in the NBA's spotlight. In March 2026 the Board of Governors voted to authorise the league to formally explore potential team expansion to Las Vegas and Seattle. As part of this process, the NBA has engaged investment bank PJT Partners as a strategic adviser to evaluate prospective markets, ownership groups, arena infrastructure, and the broader economic implications of expansion.

“Today's vote reflects our Board's interest in exploring potential expansion to Las Vegas and Seattle – two markets with a long history of support for NBA basketball,” said NBA Commissioner Adam Silver in March. “We look forward to taking this next step and engaging with interested parties.”



Basketball setup in Las Vegas' T-Mobile Arena.

Picture: Al Powers



Seattle already had a basketball team, the SuperSonics, from 1967 to 2008; however, the team moved to Oklahoma in 2008 and has been playing as the Oklahoma City Thunder ever since. With the Climate Pledge Arena Seattle has a state-of-the-art multipurpose venue – the same one where the SuperSonics played for many years before the extensive renovation. One Roof Sports & Entertainment who is the parent brand of Climate Pledge Arena and the Seattle Kraken, already responded to the NBA Board of Governors vote to formally explore potential team expansion to Las Vegas and Seattle and said that they “are ready to work with the Commissioner and the league, at their direction, to explore bringing the NBA back to Seattle.”

Las Vegas is also home to a modern arena. The T-Mobile Arena has served as the home venue for the Vegas Golden Knights of the NHL since 2017, but also has experience in hosting basketball events. For example, the NCAA Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament was held in Las Vegas between 2017 and 2020, and the U.S. national team has also played at the T-Mobile Arena.

Known worldwide for gambling and more, Las Vegas is also increasingly becoming a sports hub. The Vegas Golden Knights have been playing in “Sin City” since 2017, and in 2020, the Oakland Raiders (NFL) relocated to Las Vegas. In the future, the Athletics (MLB) are also set to play in the city; a new ballpark is currently being built for them. With an NBA franchise, Las Vegas would have a team in all four major leagues.

MLB, by contrast, remains at an earlier procedural stage. Commissioner Rob Manfred has identified 32 teams as the league's long-term target (30 teams in 2026), with one club envisioned in the East and one in the West. Formal movement is expected only after a new collective bargaining agreement with the MLB Players Association; the current deal expires on 1st December 2026. The union does not decide expansion, but negotiates player-related effects such as travel.

A further prerequisite is progress on the Tampa Bay Rays' ballpark situation as MLB wants to resolve existing franchise stability issues before adding new teams. Once that project is funded and underway, MLB could establish an Expansion Committee, at the earliest in 2027. Candidate markets include Charlotte, Montreal, Nashville, Oakland, Orlando, Portland, Raleigh, Sacramento, Salt

Lake City and Vancouver. Their cases combine market size, corporate support, territorial considerations, ownership structure and stadium readiness. Portland has identified Zidell Yards and secured authorization for up to 800 million US dollar in bonds; Salt Lake City is advancing the Power District; Nashville is evaluating downtown sites; Orlando has selected a preferred parcel; and Sacramento is providing market data while temporarily hosting the Athletics. Expansion fees could range from 2 billion to 2.5 billion US dollar per team. With Manfred planning to retire in January 2029, franchises could be awarded before then, while new ballparks may not open until 2032 or 2033.

Across the NHL, NBA and MLB, expansion is moving at different speeds but is being assessed through a similar infrastructure and investment lens. Texas has entered a defined NHL evaluation, the NBA has begun formal market exploration in Seattle and Las Vegas, and MLB is preparing the labor and governance framework for a 32-team structure. In every case, ownership capacity, venue delivery, financing and market durability remain central, while timing depends on league procedures and project readiness. ♦



STADIUM TOURS: INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Fans can take part in tours at almost all of Europe's major stadiums. The clubs and operators are constantly expanding their range of offerings, focusing on innovation and creative concepts, and pursuing a wide variety of objectives.

Europe's major stadiums attract tens of thousands of spectators to major events. Even outside these events, the venues draw in numerous fans and interested visitors with a wide range of stadium tours and activities throughout the year. For example, virtual reality, VIP and legends tours are part of the stadiums' repertoire, as is, of course, the classic tour with a guide or audio guide. Due to lower costs involved, partly because these tours follow set routes and

are easier for organisers to arrange, audio guides are now widely used.

Prices for stadium tours vary greatly across Europe, as stadiaworld's examination of 25 major stadiums on the continent shows. Whilst a budget tour at the PGE Narodowy in Warsaw is available from 40 Polish Zloty (approx. 9.44 EUR / 10.96 USD / 8.16 GBP) and tours at Germany's top stadiums are available for under 20 euros, they usually cost over 30 euros in England. A tour of the modernised Bernabéu in Madrid is available from 35 euros

with an audio guide; with a live guide, the price is 54 euros. A tour of Spotify Camp Nou, which is still undergoing renovation, is more expensive at 69 euros.

Wide Range of Tours: VR, CGI and Go-Kart

But what do the clubs and venues hope to gain from the tour programme? "Our main aim is to create memorable experiences for our visitors that bring the story and emotion of Ajax and the Johan Cruyff ArenA to life," says Martijn Maurice,



Amsterdam: the classic stadium tour can be combined with a VR experience.

Picture: Johan Cruyff ArenA

Stadium Tours: Europe 2026 (Selection)									
Country	City	Stadium	Club	Price ¹⁾	Duration (in min.)	Including Club Museum	Match Day Tour	Accessible	Special Features
Belgium	Brussels	Stade Roi Baudouin	-	14.00	approx. 60	✗	✗	✓	Group tours (min. 10 people) available
Germany	Berlin	Olympiastadion Berlin	Hertha BSC	17.00	60	✗	✗	✓ ²⁾	Special tours (Hertha, Touchdown, Birthday Tour etc.) and group tours available
Germany	Dortmund	SIGNAL IDUNA PARK	Borussia Dortmund	12.00	approx. 60	✓ ³⁾	N/A	✗ ³⁾	Special tours (Morning Pint, After Work, Adrenaline Packed Tour etc.) and group tours available
Germany	Munich	Allianz Arena	FC Bayern München	19.00	90-120	✓	✓	✗ ³⁾	Special tours (VIP, Night, over-65s Tour etc.) and group tours available
England	Liverpool	Anfield Road	Liverpool FC	30.09 ⁴⁾	N/A	✓	✓	✓	Special tours (Walk on the Pitch, Premium Legends Q&A Tour etc.) and group tours (min. 15 people) available
England	Liverpool	Hill Dickinson Stadium	Everton FC	30.09 ⁴⁾	approx. 90	✗	N/A	✓ ²⁾	Group tours available
England	London	Emirates Stadium	Arsenal FC	43.97 ⁴⁾	N/A	✓	✓	✓	Special tours (Guided Legend Tour, VIP Legend Experience etc.) and group tours available
England	London	Stamford Bridge	Chelsea FC	37.03 ⁴⁾	60	✓	✓	✓ ²⁾	CGI photos with CFC players available; Special tours (Pitch Walk Experience, Birthday, VIP Private Tour) and group tours (min. 15 people) available
England	London	Wembley Stadium connected by EE	-	18.52 ⁴⁾	approx. 90	✗	✓	✓	Special tours (VIP, Women's FA Cup Final Tour) and group tours (min. 25 people) available
England	Manchester	Etihad Stadium	Manchester City	32.40 ⁴⁾	75	✗	✓	✓	Virtual Pep Guardiola in press conference room; Special tours (VIP, Penalty on the Pitch, Walking with a Legend Tour) and group tours (min. 10 people) available
England	Manchester	Old Trafford	Manchester United	30.09 ⁴⁾	70	✓	N/A	✗ ²⁾	Special tours (Take to the Pitch, Birthday Parties etc.) and group tours available
France	Paris	Parc des Princes	Paris Saint-Germain	28.00	75	✗	✓	✓	Special tours (Birthday, Zippin' Paris, Halloween Tour etc.) and group tours (min. 10 people) available
France	Saint-Denis	Stade de France	-	18.50	approx. 90	✓ ⁵⁾	✗	✓	Group tours available
Ireland	Dublin	Croke Park	-	18.00	90	✓ ⁶⁾	✓	✓	Special tours (Pitch Perfect, Dublin's Daughters Tour etc.) and group tours available
Italy	Milan	Stadio Giuseppe Meazza	AC Milan, FC Internazionale	37.50	N/A	✓	N/A	✓	Skywalk Tour and group tours (min. 50 people) available
Italy	Turin	Allianz Stadium	Juventus FC	29.00	up to 120	✓	✓	✗ ³⁾	Group tours (min. 25 Personen) available
Netherlands	Amsterdam	Johan Cruyff ArenA	AFC Ajax	27.50	45-75	✓	N/A	✗ ²⁾	10% discount in Ajax fanshop and café included; Special tours (Off-Season, VIP, VR Ride, Heineken Tour etc.) and group tours (20 to 50 people) available
Poland	Warsaw	PGE Narodowy	-	9.44 ⁷⁾	60	✗	N/A	✓	Special tours (Feel like a VIP, Center of events Tour) and group tours available
Portugal	Lisbon	Estádio da Luz	SL Benfica	19.00	approx. 90	✓ ³⁾	N/A	✓	Special tours (Kids, VR Tour, Stadium By Night, Karts in Stadium etc.) and group tours (min. 15 people) available
Scotland	Glasgow	Celtic Park	Celtic Glasgow	21.41 ⁴⁾	60	✗	N/A	✓	Tour & Dine and group tours (min. 10 people) available
Spain	Barcelona	Spotify Camp Nou ⁸⁾	FC Barcelona	69.00	N/A	✓	✓	✗	Special tours (Barcabus Experience, Sky Tour etc.) and tours for school groups (min. 20 children) available
Spain	Bilbao	San Mamés	Athletic Club	15.00	approx. 45	✓	N/A	✓	Group tours available
Spain	Madrid	Bernabéu	Real Madrid CF	35.00	N/A	✓	N/A	✗	Special tours (Classic Flexible Time, RM Games Tour) and group tours available
Spain	Madrid	Riyadh Air Metropolitano	Atlético de Madrid	25.00	120	✓	✓	✓ ²⁾	Special tours (Summer, Kick-off, Midfield Photo, Bus Arrival Tour etc.) and group tours (min. 20 people) available
Wales	Cardiff	Principality Stadium	-	22.57 ⁴⁾	approx. 75	✗	✓	N/A ²⁾	Special tours (Rugby Legends, Santa Experience) and group tours available

1) Price for the least expensive stadium tour offered (with or without a guide). All prices in euros per adult without any concessions.

2) Register in advance.

3) Can be booked as a separate tour. 4) British pounds converted to euros. Exchange rate (1 GBP ≈ 1.16 EUR) as at 16 June 2026.

5) Permanent exhibition on the history of the stadium. 6) Access to the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) Museum.

7) Polish zloty converted to euros. Exchange rate (1 PLN ≈ 0.24 EUR) as at 16 June 2026. 8) Currently undergoing renovation.

Status: 06/2026
Source: Clubs, Stadiums

Tour Manager at the Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam. “At the same time, tours are an important commercial pillar, contributing to revenue growth for both Ajax and the ArenA. Ultimately, we want to be a leading benchmark in Europe for stadium experiences: innovative, scalable, and fully focused on the visitor.”

That is why the stadium in Amsterdam focuses on innovative concepts and offers, for example, a so-called VIP, Virtual Reality and Innovation Tour. According to Maurice, this is also why the stadium attracts a strong mix of international

and national visitors and serves a very broad audience. “Innovation, such as VR and digital elements, helps us enrich our storytelling and keep the product relevant for all kinds of visitors”, the Tour Manager says. “The range has been well received, as reflected in strong visitor numbers over the years.”

But it's not just in Amsterdam that clubs and operators are getting creative with their stadium tours. At Manchester City's Etihad Stadium, visitors can see a virtual version of the now-retired Pep Guardiola and first team players in the

press conference room. At Stamford Bridge in London, visitors can have CGI photos taken with Chelsea FC players, whilst at the Stadio Giuseppe Meazza in Milan, a Skywalk Tour is available. And SL Benfica has already been offering a go-kart ride at the Estádio da Luz on selected dates before the actual tour begins.

Link to the Club Museum

In 16 of the 25 stadiums examined, the club museum or similar attractions – such as Ajax Amsterdam's Gallery of Fame – are →



Bilbao: tours are available both with a tour guide and with an audio guide.

Picture: Athletic Club

either included in the tour or can be booked as an optional extra. This is also the case at Athletic Club in Bilbao: a ticket for a stadium tour, whether with a guide or an audio guide, grants entry to Athletic Club's three-storey museum at San Mamés.

"With the museum and stadium tour, we aim to reflect the defining characteristics of a unique club in a globalised world," says Asier Arrate, curator of the Athletic Club Museum. "We want them to get to know us and visit the museum, as this will enhance their experience of the stadium tour". Since it opened in 2017, over 900,000

visitors have come to the museum; in 2025, the figure was 161,000.

Accessibility and Match Day Tours

The tours in Bilbao are accessible. This is a widespread standard met by 17 of the 25 stadiums examined. And where this is not the case, stadiums such as SIGNAL IDUNA PARK in Dortmund and the Allianz Stadium in Turin offer separate tours specifically for people with walking difficulties. Other venues, such as Old Trafford in Manchester, ask for

advance booking if there are any access requirements.

Group tours are also available at most stadiums on request. And during the season, match day tours are a key part of the tour programme at many venues, as stadiaworld's overview shows. For an additional fee, fans can, for example, gain "access to exclusive areas of the Spotify Camp Nou in the moments leading up to the game" in Barcelona, or "experience the buzz, energy and build-up before kick-off" at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff.

Potential and New Ideas

In any case, the venues and clubs are not running out of ideas for new tours; there is still scope for further development. "We would like to offer more specific and personalised tours for different groups whenever possible," says Arrate. Another aim at Bilbao is to "have former players act as guides so they can share their first-hand experiences".

The offering in Amsterdam is also being continually adapted. "We see strong potential in further personalising the customer journey and integrating tours more closely with football matches, events and concerts in the stadium. At the same time, digitalisation and data-driven marketing will play an increasingly important role," says Maurice from the Johan Cruyff ArenA. Accordingly, the focus is on "developing new, immersive concepts that keep meeting evolving visitor expectations" This is a goal that virtually all major stadiums in Europe will continue to pursue with their tours in the future. ♦



Stadium tours are often linked with a visit to the club museum.

Picture: Athletic Club / Mariell Oviedo

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“AIM FOR A CONSISTENT LEVEL OF DELIVERY ACROSS STADIUMS”

For major tournaments such as the FIFA World Cup stadiums must make numerous adjustments and provide a consistent look, quality, and comfort throughout all host venues. Tiago Paes, FIFA's Head of Venue Management, explains what is necessary.



Picture: FIFA

Tiago Paes

Can you describe your main responsibilities as FIFA's Head of Venue Management? What does a typical week look like for you?

PAES: Venue Management oversees the planning and operations of FIFA World Cup stadiums. During the planning phase, the objective is to understand the different stadium layouts and characteristics and adapt them to FIFA's requirements. This includes transform-

ing these requirements into venue specific implementation plans, including resources, budgets, and timelines.

We work in very close collaboration with all other departments (functional areas) and act as an integrator to ensure that spaces are correctly allocated and that client flows are well designed. The process is extensive and requires multiple site visits, virtual meetings, map revisions, and the development of operational policies and procedures. We then develop, test, implement, and deliver venue operating plans as part of the overall integrated planning roadmap.

During the tournament, we ensure that all planned policies and procedures are followed on site, while also maintaining efficient

communication across departments and ensuring strong integration with stadium authorities and public stakeholders.

A typical week includes many meetings with functional teams and a lot of work on stadium layouts – reviewing maps and working closely with our Venue Design team to make sure the venues are planned correctly. The process is continuous and detail-focused, with regular updates to plans, layouts, and operational procedures.

Do you also oversee non competition sites such as IBC, MMC, workforce and accreditation centres? From your perspective, what exactly falls under 'venue management' at FIFA, and where does your remit end and other functions begin?

PAES: In a typical FIFA World Cup scenario, where these sites are spread across different host cities, it does not make sense for Venue Management to be directly involved in all of them. For example, the IBC is managed by the TV department, accreditation centres are smaller facilities usually located adjacent to the stadiums, and Volunteer Centres are positioned within the host cities and managed by the Volunteer Department.

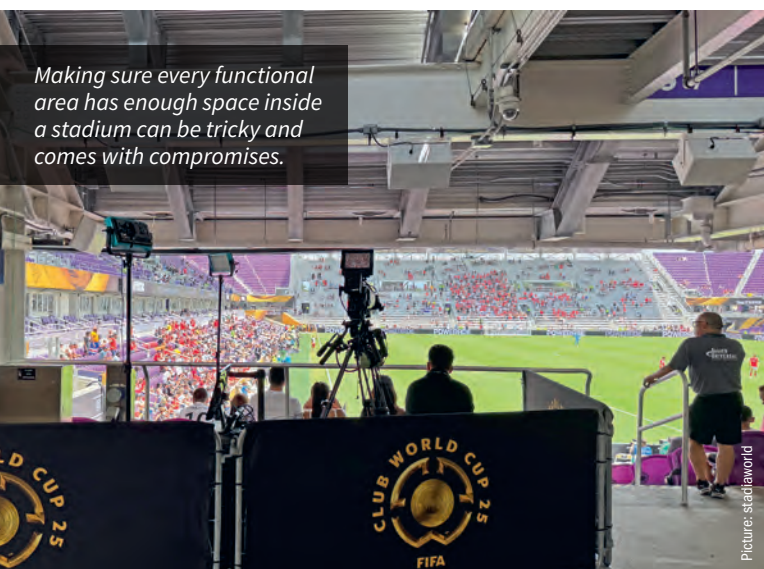
Wherever Venue Management is involved, we act as an integrator, coordinator, and facilitator – and, when required, as an arbitrator between functional areas. In simple terms, we provide the overall framework and enable alignment across departments, while the specific operations remain the responsibility of each functional area.

How is FIFA's venue management function structured – between a central team in Zurich, event LOC's, local venue managers and stadium owners/operators?

PAES: We operate with a very small central team in Zurich and deploy experienced Venue Managers to the host countries, complemented by local hires. This approach allows us to bring knowledge, standards, and experience from previous tournaments into the local environment, while at the same time developing and training the next generation of Venue Managers in the host countries. It also creates a strong balance between international expertise and local knowledge.

At the same time, we maintain a good balance between experience and local knowledge, and we aim to leave a legacy in the host countries by developing people who are fully prepared to continue working at local venues or to support future FIFA events.

Venue management is effectively the integrator for security, transport, ticketing, media, broadcast, hospitality and fan services inside the stadium footprint. What does 'good integration'



Making sure every functional area has enough space inside a stadium can be tricky and comes with compromises.

Picture: stadiaworld

From 20+ year-old, uncovered stadiums to fully-roofed new-buils, each stadium comes with its unque challenges.

Picture: stadiaworld



look like to you in practice, and where are the typical friction points you try to eliminate early in planning?

PAES: I often use the analogy of an orchestra – the maestro is not playing any instrument but is responsible for the final result.

At the stadium, the venue manager is not directly operating the different areas. We rely on the expertise of the functional teams – media operations, broadcast, hospitality, competition, and others. However, from the perspective of senior management, the venue manager is the main point of contact at the venue and ultimately responsible for the overall quality of delivery.

There is a very fine line between creating the right framework and conditions for teams to perform at their best, and not getting in the way of their operations.

In the early stages, the main friction points are usually related to space allocation. Every functional area wants to optimize its operation and provide the best possible service to its clients. Our role in Venue Management is to take a step back and act in the best interest of the overall event, not any single department – while always respecting key priorities such as safety, security, and the core purpose of the event, which is football.

**“WHEREVER VENUE
MANAGEMENT IS
INVOLVED, WE ACT
AS AN INTEGRATOR,
COORDINATOR, AND
FACILITATOR”**

This often requires trade-offs. Being efficient in one area may mean adjusting another. The key to managing this is clear and open communication – ensuring that all stakeholders understand why certain decisions are made and how they contribute to the overall success of the event.

How is FIFA addressing the total fan experience from arrival to departure? What measures are you taking to enhance spectators’ end-to-end journey? How involved can you be in matters of transportation, ticketing, etc?

PAES: The fan experience is the result of close collaboration across multiple departments – from communications and ticketing to transport, accommodation, F&B, licensing, security and commercial partners.

At the stadium level, Venue Management plays a key role, particularly from arrival to departure. We are heavily involved in last-mile planning, including the allocation of parking areas by client group and the design of arrival flows based on entrance capacities. This requires strong integration with Transport, Security, Ticketing, Fan Operations, Signage, and the Host Cities. ➔

Our objective is to ensure that spectators arrive smoothly and are distributed efficiently across the stadium, aligned with the capacity of each entry point. We use ticketing information to guide fans to specific entrances, but we also focus on making the journey as simple and comfortable as possible – aligning access routes, parking locations, and seating information.

Inside the stadium, we work with multiple teams to deliver a full experience, including entertainment, activations, and fan engagement. We know that for many, attending a FIFA World Cup is a once-in-a-lifetime moment. Our role is to make sure that every detail contributes to making that experience smooth, memorable, and special.

Looking back at recent tournaments, what have been the topics you had to intervene on the most? What are the biggest pain points for stadiums that were inaugurated 15-20 years ago?

PAES: It is difficult to identify one single pattern across different FIFA World Cups, as each context is unique. However, one of the main challenges is aligning expectations – helping stadium operators to understand FIFA's requirements and how they contribute to the success of the event, while at the same time ensuring that our own teams adapt to the reality of each venue.

We always aim for a consistent level of delivery across stadiums, but we are fully aware that flexibility is essential. Each venue comes with its own constraints – whether it is size, age, infrastructure, or whether it was originally designed for football or another sport.

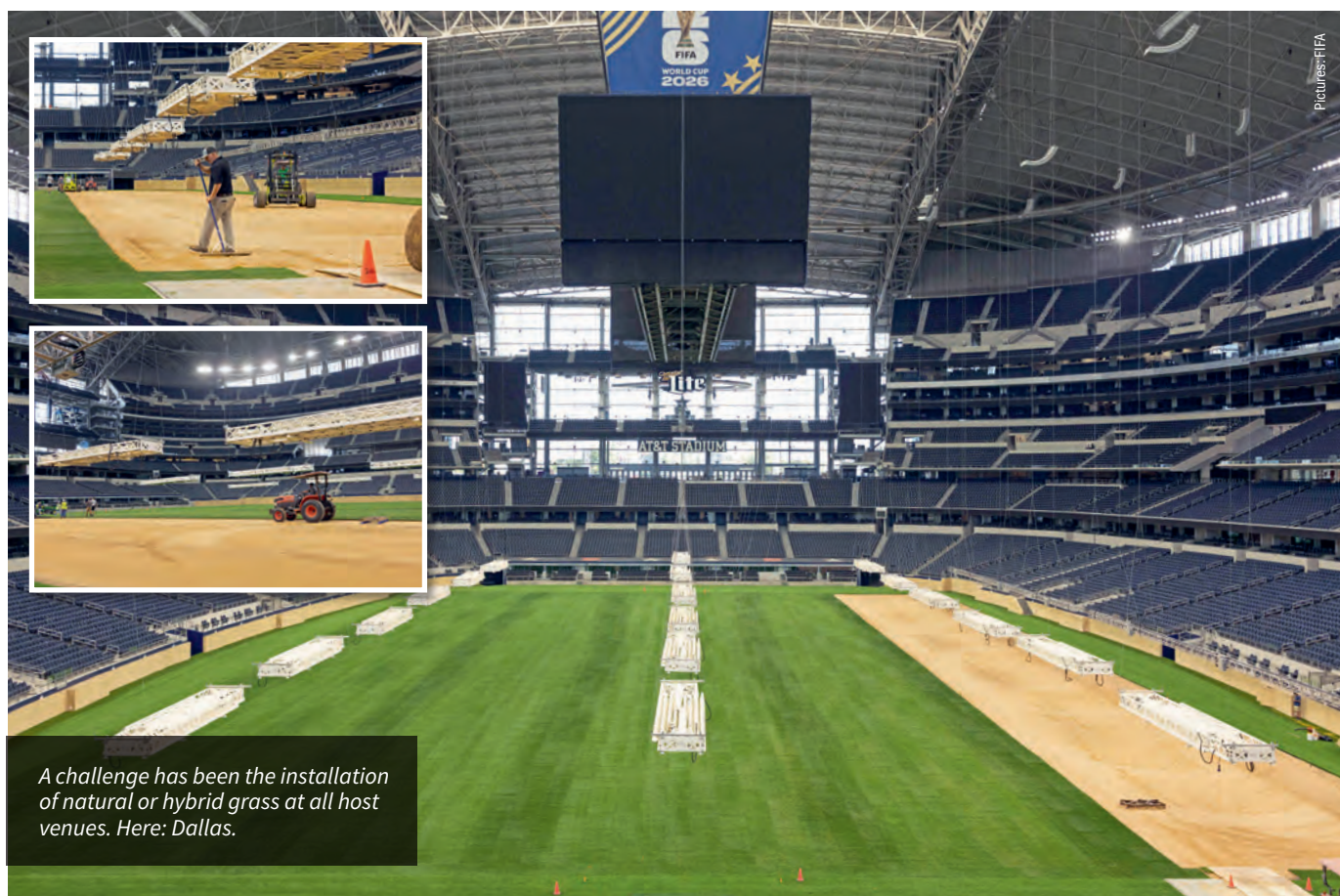
Stadiums that are 15–20 years old I still consider modern, and they usually require only limited upgrades or adjustments. The bigger challenges tend to be with older and more traditional venues, which often need improvements in areas such as safety and security, technology, and catering facilities. In particular, kitchen spaces and back-of-house catering infrastructure are key limitations that we face.

Ultimately, the balance is between maintaining high standards and being pragmatic – finding solutions that work within the specific realities of each stadium.

For events such as the FIFA World Cup you oversee teams of a couple of hundred persons. What profiles and competencies are you looking for in venue managers and venue operations managers, and how do you ensure consistency of standards across such a large workforce?

PAES: For the upcoming FIFA World Cup in North America, we typically have a core Venue Management team of three to four people per venue, depending on specific needs. This team leads and coordinates a broader FIFA operational group of around 70-80 people from different functional areas. Beyond that, this group manages an even larger workforce including suppliers, partners, and volunteers.

On a match day, when considering the full workforce – FIFA staff, suppliers, stadium personnel, security forces, F&B operators, cleaning teams, and others – we average around 7,000+ people per



stadium. Managing this scale requires strong coordination and very robust operational planning.

In terms of profiles, we look for Venue Managers who demonstrate strong leadership, decision-making, accountability, and initiative. The ability to work under pressure and manage tight deadlines is essential. They also need to be team players, with strong listening and negotiation skills, and a solid understanding of different operational areas.

Consistency across such a large workforce comes from clear structures, well-defined processes, and continuous training and communication. We invest significant effort in planning, alignment, and regular coordination to ensure that standards are understood and delivered consistently across all venues.

What role do modern technologies play in your venue management strategy? Are there particular innovations you are using to improve efficiency, crowd management or fan services?

PAES: Technology supports us across many areas, from simple document sharing and communication to more advanced planning for crowd management.

Today, we can easily share live documents with stadiums and suppliers, allowing all stakeholders to collaborate in real time, with access to updated operational maps, activity schedules, and delivery plans. This improves alignment and speeds up decision-making.

We also see strong improvements in crowd management simulations, which are now more accurate and accessible than in previous cycles. For the upcoming World Cup, we will also use drones to support crowd monitoring, helping Venue Management and Security teams to identify congestion early and adjust flows when needed.

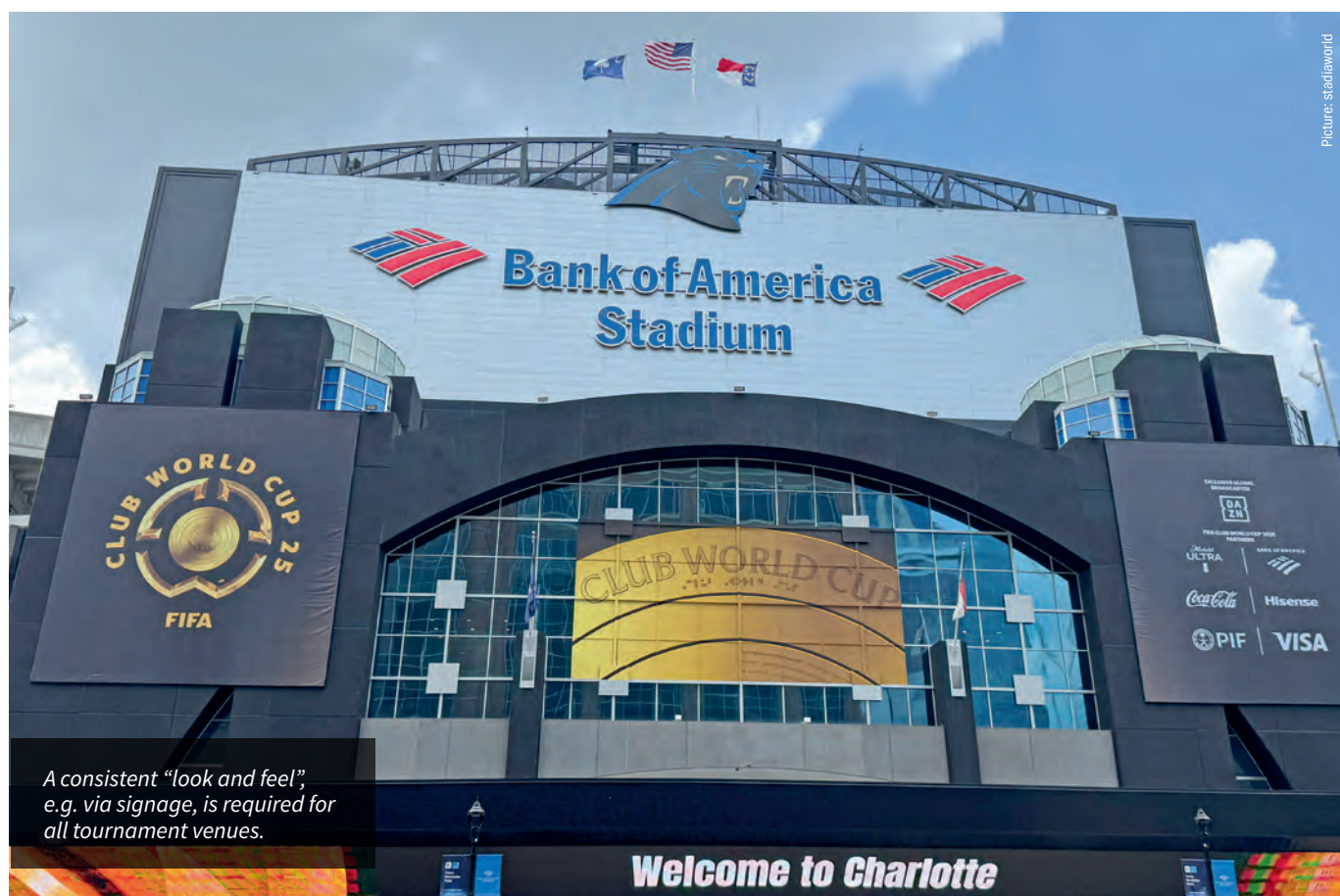
However, the nature of a live event has not changed with technology. It is an important tool, but the delivery still depends on people. The thousands of staff working in a stadium need to be well trained, properly equipped, and motivated to deliver a positive experience.

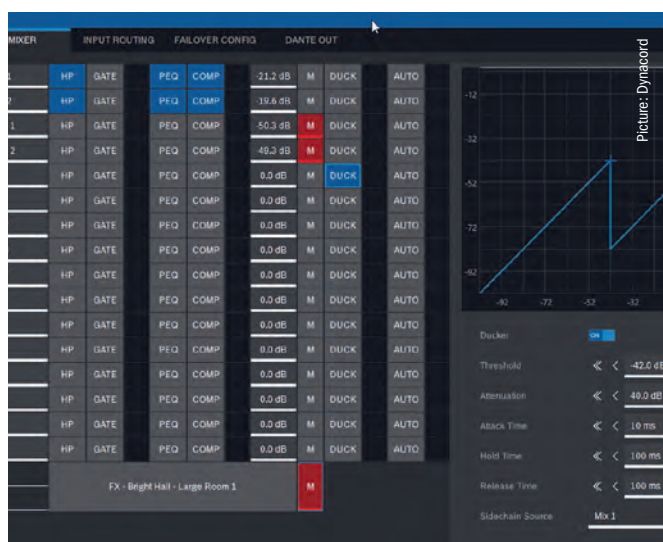
In the end, technology enhances our operations, but it is the people on the ground who make the event successful.

From your vantage point, what are the next big shifts stadium operators/planners should be preparing for in the next 5-10 years?

PAES: Safety and comfort have been major areas of improvement over the past decades, and this will continue to be a priority. Looking ahead, however, the next big shift for stadiums will be the overall fan experience, supported by the use of smart technology and AI.

This includes bringing fans closer to the athletes, offering more exclusive and authentic experiences, and enhancing premium concepts such as club lounges. There is also a growing expectation for greater variety and higher quality in food, beverage, and commercial offerings. Technology will play an increasingly important role – particularly in video, sound, and connectivity. ♦





AI VIDEO SURVEILLANCE FOR LARGE AREAS

At SicherheitsExpo 2026, Dallmeier will showcase the Panomera® V8, an AI-powered video surveillance system for large-area monitoring. Combining multifocal sensor technology, eight interconnected AI chips and a seamless 180° field of view, it delivers consistently high resolution over long distances, enabling precise object detection while reducing blind spots, duplicate data and false alarms. By covering larger areas with fewer cameras, the system lowers infrastructure, installation and operating costs, especially for critical infrastructure, industrial and logistics sites. Co-exhibitor EIZO will demonstrate compatible IP decoder and monitor solutions for direct, high-quality live image display up to 4K UHD.

26 LED DISPLAYS COMPLETE INTER MIAMI'S NEW HOME

Daktronics has partnered with DCL (Design Communications, Ltd.) to design, manufacture and install 26 LED displays totaling nearly 10,000 sq feet (929 m²) at Inter Miami CF's new home, Nu Stadium at Miami Freedom Park. Each end of the venue features a curved LED video display, featuring nearly 2,500 sq feet (232 m²) each, to share live video and instant replays of the action. The two curved end video displays at the ends of the field each measure roughly 26.5 feet (8m) high by 93.5 feet (25.5 m) wide and feature 10-millimeter pixel spacing to deliver crisp, clear imagery to all the videos, graphics and statistics fans have come to expect at live events. Each display is also capable of variable content zoning allowing each to be divided into multiple zones to share any combination of game information, animations and sponsorship messages needed for each event.

SMARTER AND MORE FLEXIBLE SOUND SYSTEM CONTROL

Dynacord has released SONICUE Sound System Software 1.6, adding smarter control, expanded DSP functions and greater hardware flexibility for installers and system integrators. The update introduces Automixer and Ducker features for IX Series multichannel DSP networked power amplifiers, enabling advanced microphone and background source management without requiring an additional DSP device. SONICUE 1.6 also expands TaskEngine

integration with new TCP, UDP, WebSocket and PJLink protocol blocks, allowing direct control of third-party devices such as projectors and AV encoders/decoders. SONICUE Control now runs natively on Android devices, including tablets, smartphones and fixed touch panels. Further improvements include easier speaker-mode changes, enhanced drag-and-drop programming, five new demo projects and free availability via Dynacord's website.

OFFICIAL LIGHTING PROVIDER FOR LA28

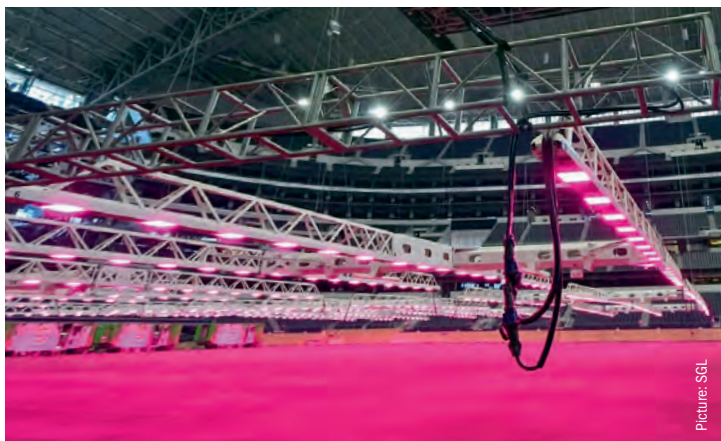
Musco Lighting has announced it's been named the Official Sport Presentation and Broadcast Lighting Provider of the LA28 Olympic and Paralympic Games and Team USA – bringing field of play lighting as well as sports presentation entertainment lighting excellence to the Games.

"Musco's first involvement with lighting Olympic venues was the 1984 Games in Los Angeles," said Jeff Rogers, CEO, Musco Lighting. "Forty-four years later, our team is enthused about the opportunity to partner with LA28 and Team USA."

The LA28 Games will be the largest Olympic and Paralympic Games in history

featuring new sports, expanded events, and greater parity for women athletes. With more than 50 years of expertise in broadcast lighting solutions, Musco delivers innovative, state-of-the-art sports presentation and entertainment lighting that elevates the experience for both athletes and fans.

"Musco Lighting has a storied history of bringing presentation excellence to fields of play in our city, dating back to the last time the Games came to town," said Reynold Hoover, CEO of LA28. "We are excited to partner with Musco to ensure our venues shine brilliantly and deliver an unparalleled viewing experience."



AT&T STADIUM: GLOWING BRIGHT PINK FOR THE WORLD CUP

AT&T Stadium in Arlington hosted more matches than any other venue during the 2026 FIFA World Cup. SGL's LED grow lighting system played a central role in making natural grass viable inside the fully covered stadium.

When the Netherlands and Japan opened the tournament at "Dallas Stadium," the Dallas Cowboys' artificial turf had already been removed. In its place was a newly constructed pitch of Kentucky bluegrass and ryegrass, raised by around two feet and widened at both ends to meet FIFA requirements. In the weeks leading up to kickoff, the entire stadium bowl glowed bright pink – a visible effect of the LED grow lighting system installed to keep the grass healthy indoors.

FIFA's requirement for natural grass at all venues posed significant challenges in the United States, where many NFL stadiums are built around artificial turf. Arlington, selected to host nine matches, faced the most demanding conditions of all host venues. Despite features such as a retractable roof, large glass openings and a controlled indoor climate, large sections of the pitch remain in shadow, limiting natural light.

To address this, FIFA involved SGL early in the planning process. Drawing on years of experience with elite natural grass systems, the company developed a full-pitch LED solution suspended from the roof. The system consisted of 18 truss rigs equipped with high-performance LED panels that delivered a tailored light spec-

trum to support photosynthesis. This mix of wavelengths produced the characteristic magenta glow inside the stadium. When in use, the rigs were lowered close to the pitch; on match days, they were lifted roughly 90 metres (295 mi) into the roof structure, completely out of sight. According to FIFA, this setup was a tournament first and essential to ensuring the grass could withstand the full match schedule.

The lighting system was complemented by the construction of a complete natural grass pitch within approximately six weeks. Starting from the stadium's concrete base, irrigation and ventilation systems were installed, followed by a sand layer to support root development. The turf itself was grown at a sod farm in Colorado, transported in refrigerated trucks and installed in large rolls. To improve durability, synthetic fibres were stitched into the surface. Once in place, a team of around 25 groundskeepers maintained the pitch daily – mowing, watering, fertilising and monitoring plant health – supported by continuous data analysis and SGL's agronomic expertise.

Beyond visual quality, the pitch had to meet strict performance standards, including ball behaviour, surface firmness and player traction. Previous test events and research projects helped refine the system and reduce operational risk. In this context, Arlington became a key proof point for maintaining high-quality natural grass indoors over several weeks of tournament play.



POWERFUL SOUND FOR T20 CRICKET

At T20 cricket matches at Seat Unique Stadium in Gloucestershire, event production specialists Enlightened implemented a NEXO sound system to achieve consistent coverage, high speech intelligibility, and an energetic atmosphere. Although the team was already familiar with the venue, the requirements of pitch-level play introduced new challenges.

Speakers had to be positioned low around the field to avoid obstructing sightlines, leading to the use of compact GEO M6 line array stacks mounted on MSUB15 subwoofers along the boundary. While this setup met acoustic and visual requirements, the real complexity lay in the system infrastructure.

A Dante network with NEXO NXAMP controllers was deployed across five locations around the ground, requiring cable runs of up to 140 metres (459 ft) – beyond standard recommendations. Additional network hardware was not an option due to player safety risks near the boundary. Nevertheless, the system operated reliably without dropouts.

With approximately 2.5 km (1.6 mi) of cabling in total, efficiency in setup was critical. The infrastructure remains in place throughout the season, while speakers and amplifiers are installed on a match-by-match basis. Thanks to clear labeling and thorough preparation, the system can be redeployed in around two hours, ensuring consistent performance and an enhanced matchday experience for spectators.

LIGHT AS A SYSTEM

HOW MODERN VENUES APPROACH HOLISTIC ILLUMINATION

From the perimeter to the interior – contemporary lighting concepts for safety, experience and efficient operations.

Modern sports and event venues are evolving into complex multi-use facilities where matchday operations, entertainment, conferences, corporate events, hospitality and everyday use all overlap. Lighting plays a central role: it ensures safety and orientation, shapes the visitor experience, enables professional working conditions and is a key lever for energy consumption and operating costs.

are comprehensive venue concepts that treat a stadium or arena as a coherent system – from access routes and car parks to forecourts, foyers, concourses, hospitality areas, functional zones and back-of-house.

The goal is clear zoning with defined roles for each lighting solution, aligned with standards, safety requirements and the intended user experience. At the same time, operators must balance high flexibility in day-to-day operations with managea-

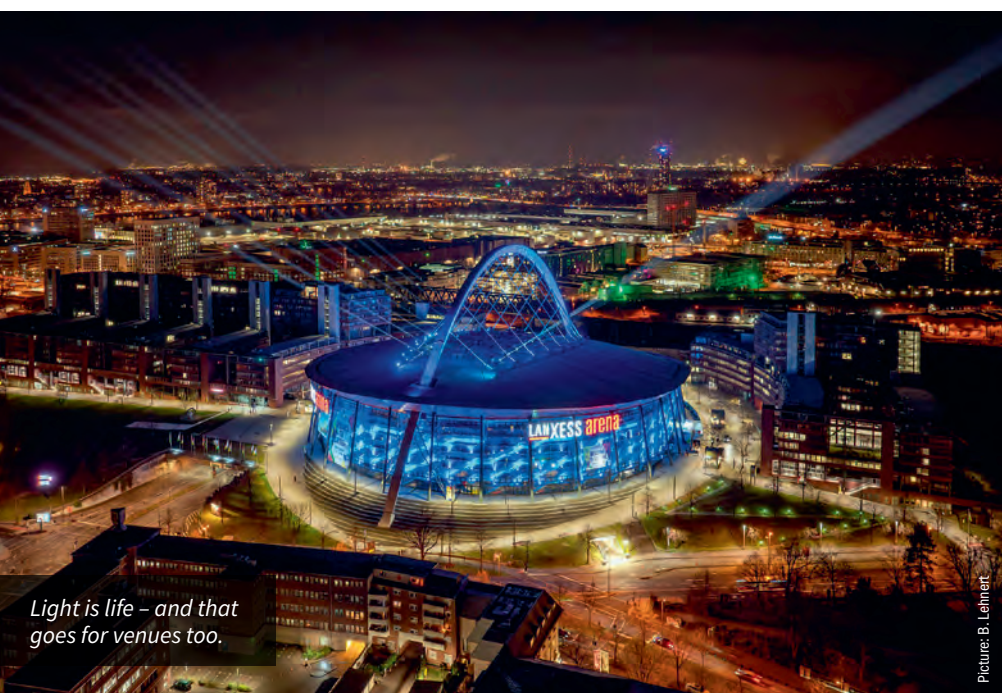
cost efficiency, sustainability and digitalisation – from an efficient luminaire portfolio to light management and energy monitoring, through to the question of how cost centres can be cleanly separated and usage transparently tracked.

Comfort and Brand Identity Starting at Arrival

Good venue lighting begins on access routes, car parks and forecourts. Here, light ensures that visitors can navigate safely, recognize trip hazards and obstacles in good time, and feel comfortable on pathways, stairs and transition areas even during the darker months. Lighting also helps to defuse conflict points between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Relevant standards and guidelines for road and area lighting define minimum requirements for illuminance, uniformity and glare limitation.

Car parks and parking structures form a distinct zone with clear requirements for safety, orientation and crime prevention. Specifications covering uniform illumination, permissible contrast levels and the emphasis of entrances and exits, crossings, stairs and escape routes are designed to eliminate dark areas and enhance the sense of security. Modern LED mast and area luminaires with asymmetric light distribution, low glare and good color rendering meet these requirements at significantly reduced connected loads; via lighting controls, illuminance levels can be dimmed or zoned according to occupancy, time of day or event type without compromising safety.

Facades, forecourts and architectural accents bridge the gap between functional exterior lighting and brand presence.



Problems arise when lighting concepts have grown historically: piecemeal measures, isolated solutions and heterogeneous technology make efficient operations difficult and complicate adaptation to new use scenarios. What is increasingly in demand

ble systems in the background: technology that calls up scenes for matchday, cleaning, corporate events or training at the touch of a button, without requiring specialist knowledge at every control point. Beyond safety and comfort, the primary drivers are

Rather than uniformly high illuminance levels, the focus is on differentiated, low-glare staging that supports orientation and conveys the character of the venue. Many operators rely on dynamic, scene-integrated facade and accent lighting that is more active on matchdays and event nights, but runs at reduced levels or within restricted time windows during everyday operations. Exterior areas thus become an integral part of a zoned lighting concept that brings together safety, brand impact and energy efficiency – and, where required, venue-wide branding scenes that extend from the facade through to the interior.

Wayfinding, Retail and Atmosphere

In foyers, entrance areas and concourses, lighting determines how “readable” a venue is for visitors. Well-planned lighting solutions guide visitor flows intuitively from the entrance to staircases, elevators, stand access points and service counters. Typical solutions include wide-beam ceiling or pendant luminaires with effective glare control and balanced brightness distribution, supplemented by accent lights that highlight ticket counters, information points, security checkpoints or circulation axes. In heavily trafficked concourse areas, linearly integrated handrail or step lighting and directional luminaires help make walking surfaces and edges recognizable early, without causing glare for visitors or staff.

Kiosks, food and beverage outlets and retail areas call for a different lighting dramaturgy than pure circulation zones. Here, general illumination and accent lighting are combined: area luminaires or recessed downlights provide a uniform base layer, while spotlights and light strips are directed at counters, refrigerated displays, product presentations or menu boards. Color temperatures and color rendering are selected to make food look appetizing, club colors reproduce accurately and digital screens remain clearly legible. Via light management, scenes can be configured for pre-sales, peak operations and interval periods, adjusting brightness and emphasis to actual demand while simultaneously saving energy.

In hospitality areas such as suites, business seats, clubs or event spaces, high design expectations are added to the functional requirements. Light must create atmosphere, support a range of uses – from

business meetings and buffets to post-match celebrations – while maintaining a visual connection to the action on the pitch or stage. Modular luminaire families are frequently used: linear systems, ceiling and wall luminaires or pendants that maintain a consistent aesthetic language while varying in output, optics and light distribution. Dimmable scenes allow the ambiance of a space to be transformed at the touch of a button – for example, neutral and bright for daytime meetings, warmer and more contrasted for evening events. Across visitor and audience zones as a whole, a graduated portfolio of general, accent and orientation lighting is required, one that integrates safety, brand presence and experience, and can be transitioned into different use scenarios without significant effort.

The Playing Surface: Sports Standards and Show

On sports and event surfaces, the requirements of athletes, officials, spectators and TV productions converge. Relevant standards and guidelines define minimum values for illuminance, uniformity and glare limitation, differentiating between training, national competition and top-level matches with broadcast coverage. In addition, governing bodies and event organizers specify requirements for color rendering and color temperature in their stadium and arena lighting guidelines, ensuring consistent imagery for live broadcasts and content production.

With the widespread adoption of LED systems, sports and event surfaces have simultaneously become stages for integrated light shows. Stands, roof zones, perimeter board systems and areas close to the field of play are equipped with full-color, network-controlled luminaires that support pre-game presentations, team introductions or goal and scoring scenarios. Many operators deliberately maintain a distinction between a consistently “pure white” field of play illumination – optimized for sports and broadcast requirements – and color-dynamic components in the spectator areas; this preserves image quality in the core zone while allowing the venue to be activated as a show environment.

In parallel, there are integrated concepts in which high-performance LED floodlights cover not only standard matchday

operation but also defined show scenes – such as color changes, dimming sequences or timed effects around kick-off, team walk-outs or award ceremonies. In indoor arenas, such solutions are particularly common, as the field of play, stands and roof illumination are physically closer together and can be controlled via shared light management systems. A clear scene separation in operations is essential: modes for competitive play with broadcast, training or everyday use, and show presentations are stored distinctly so that operating staff can call up predefined profiles. Modern venue concepts thus make sports and event surfaces highly functional working and playing areas that are equally flexible, activatable experience zones.

The Backbone of Venue Operations, Well Illuminated

In changing rooms, washrooms and welfare areas, functionality takes priority: users need to move safely, reliably identify clothing and equipment, and use mirror areas without disruptive shadows. Relevant standards and guidelines typically specify illuminance levels of around 200 lux or above for changing rooms, with significantly higher values in mirror zones to ensure that facial details and equipment can be clearly assessed. In practice, robust ceiling and wall luminaires with high color rendering are used; in wet areas, appropriate ingress protection ratings and easy-to-clean surfaces are mandatory. Supplementary mirror lighting or vertically effective lighting solutions prevent harsh shadows and ensure that medical checks and preparatory tasks can be carried out safely.

Athlete and team changing rooms carry an additional emotional and design dimension. Operators are increasingly using light as part of their overall branding: color temperatures, color-dynamic accents and stored scenes support team identity, pre-game rituals and the needs of different user groups. In venues with more than one home team or rotating primary users, flexible lighting concepts allow corporate identity elements to be adjusted at the touch of a button – from club colors in light strips and accent luminaires to scenes that complement logos, visual worlds or music control. Technically, such solutions are based on addressable LED systems and →

Integrated System Portfolio: Components and Interaction

How leading manufacturers build venue lighting as an integrated system



All modules communicate via the central platform. Scenes are defined across the entire venue and executed on a zone-by-zone basis.

Source: stadiaworld

integrated light management platforms that embed the changing rooms closely within the venue-wide scene concept, without compromising the functional requirements for illuminance, glare control and color rendering.

Social rooms, break areas and staff restaurants call for balanced light that supports relaxation and communication while keeping information – such as screens or notice boards – clearly legible. Ceiling-level general lighting and accent elements are frequently combined to pleasantly high-light dining areas, informal meeting zones or coffee and snack points. Color temperature and color rendering typically follow workplace standards, though a slightly warmer choice can enhance the quality of the space as a place to spend time. Via light management, social areas can be run at higher levels during peak times and at reduced levels during off-peak periods, without requiring on-site intervention.

Back-of-house spaces, control rooms, ticketing offices and administrative areas clearly fall under the requirements of workplace lighting standards for interior workplaces. Good glare control, adequate horizontal and vertical illuminance levels and high uniformity are the decisive factors here in supporting screen-based

work and conventional office tasks. Typical solutions combine general area lighting with task-specific lighting – for example, recessed or surface-mounted luminaires with controlled luminance distribution, supplemented by floor or desk lamps. Technical and plant rooms, meanwhile, require robust luminaires capable of withstanding temperature or dust exposure, providing a clear view of switchgear, distribution boards and control elements. Taken together, functional and working areas form the backbone of venue operations – they require standards-compliant, low-fatigue lighting solutions that are efficient, maintenance-friendly and integrated across the lighting and building management infrastructure.

Alongside this functional differentiation, manufacturers have established comprehensive system portfolios on the supply side. Several providers now cover large parts of a venue with their interior and exterior luminaire ranges – from access routes and car parks through foyers, hospitality and changing rooms to back-of-house and technical areas – integrating these modularly into shared light management platforms. Specialized playing surface luminaires remain a separate topic in many projects, but can increasingly be

integrated at least at the control level into the overall system.

Scenes, Data, Interfaces

Modern venue lighting is barely conceivable without intelligent light management. Systems based on DALI and DALI-2, in some cases supplemented by wireless solutions, link luminaires, presence and daylight sensors, and control panels into zones in which scenes, time programs and control curves are centrally stored. For operators, this means that scenes for matchday, training, corporate events, cleaning or night mode can be defined venue-wide and called up at the touch of a button – from the facade through audience areas and hospitality to changing rooms, back-of-house and technical spaces.

Via interfaces to building management systems and energy management platforms, lighting becomes part of a comprehensive building automation framework. Load profiles and energy consumption can be recorded and analyzed by zone, cost centers are mapped separately, and adjustments to occupancy profiles or seasonal patterns can be implemented at the building management level rather than at individual distribution boards. At the →

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same time, networked lighting delivers operational and status data that can be used for condition monitoring and early predictive maintenance approaches – for example, to avoid failures, schedule maintenance on a needs basis and extend the service life of installations. Critically, this technical complexity must translate into clear, intuitive interfaces for operating staff: a small number of easily understood scenes, unambiguous responsibilities and user roles, and the ability to map venue-wide branding and usage concepts consistently across all zones.

ing technology solutions typically involve higher upfront investment than straightforward one-for-one retrofits, but open up additional savings potential across energy, maintenance and operational organisation that can pay off over the lifecycle.

A consistently zoned concept also supports clean cost center separation. When exterior areas, sports surfaces, hospitality and back-of-house are clearly addressable and individually recorded via light and energy management, consumption can be attributed to the responsible party – for example, primary users, tenants or event

luminaires, but with an analysis of uses, zones and operating models. Which sports and event formats are planned? How are visitor and hospitality areas distributed? Which workplaces are critical, which routes are safety-relevant? And how do these profiles shift over the course of the year? On this basis, a lighting concept is developed that defines zones and scenes, establishes standards-compliant quality requirements and incorporates integration with building and safety systems from an early stage. In implementation, operators, planners and system integrators ideally work closely together to base technology decisions not only on acquisition costs but on overall operations, maintenance strategies and staffing resources.

One relevant factor is whether a project relies on many individual solutions or on comprehensive system portfolios. Several manufacturers now offer modular platforms that – with the exception of some specialized playing surface luminaires – cover all the essential zones of a venue and can be connected venue-wide via light management systems. For operators, there can be a clear advantage when large parts of the lighting installation come from such an integrated system: interfaces are reduced, scenes and operating modes can be controlled via a small number of interfaces, and service and spare parts concepts are concentrated around manageable product families. It remains important, however, to assess on a project-specific basis where specialist systems are required and how these can be cleanly integrated into the overall architecture.

From an operator's perspective, the success of a lighting concept is determined not only by the grand opening, but in day-to-day operations: how reliably can scenes actually be controlled, how stable are interfaces, how quickly can faults be identified and resolved, and how transparent are consumption and costs? The more clearly responsibilities, processes and training are defined, the more likely a technical system is to become a dependable operational tool. Many operators use pilot areas, test phases or sample installations to evaluate control concepts, lighting moods and monitoring solutions at a smaller scale before rolling them out venue-wide – an approach that helps secure acceptance and avoid misguided investment. ♦



Picture: Eintracht Frankfurt Stadion GmbH

Investment and Lifecycle

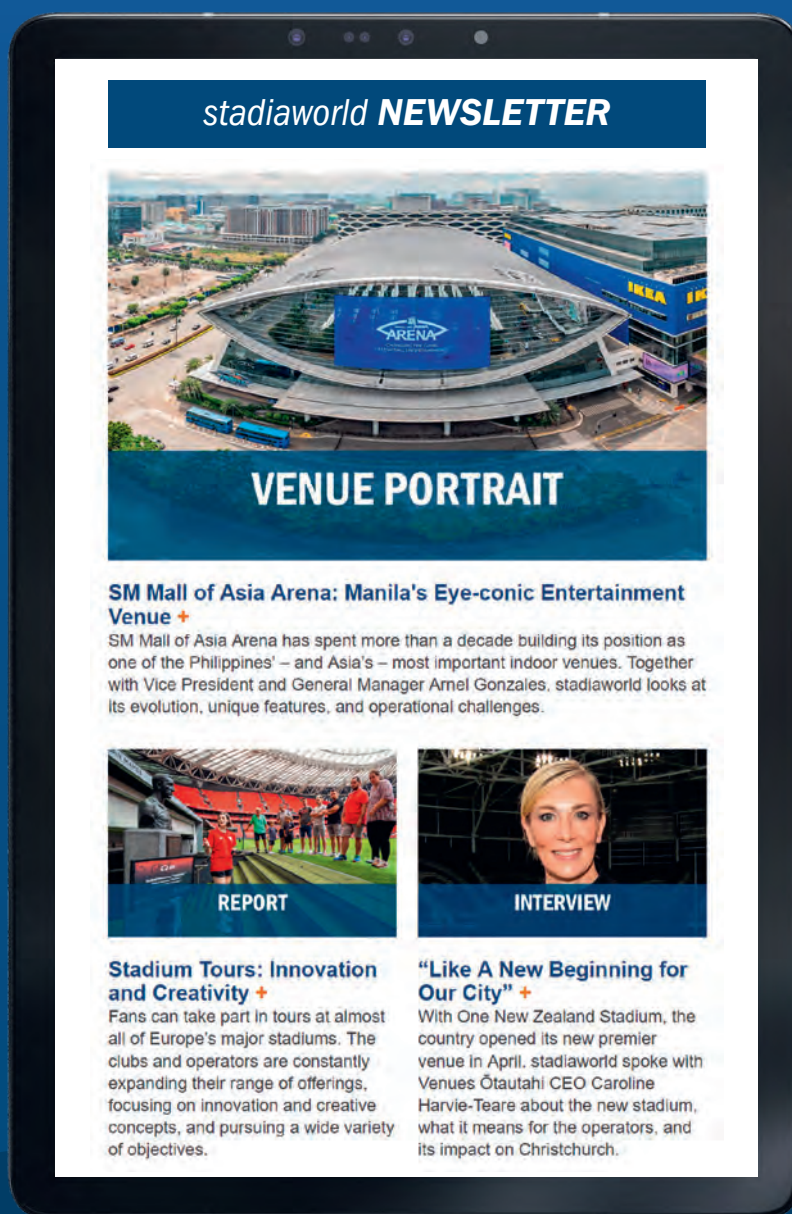
For operators, the ongoing costs and sustainability profile of lighting installations are coming into focus alongside the technology itself. Efficient LED systems with demand-responsive controls can – depending on the baseline – significantly reduce energy consumption compared to older installations, in some cases by 50 to 70 percent, delivering a noticeable reduction in both electricity costs and CO₂ emissions. Crucially, planning must look beyond the initial investment and consider total lifecycle costs: energy, maintenance, replacement cycles, cleaning effort and potential decommissioning costs. Comprehensive light management and build-

organisers. This creates transparency in budget discussions and allows operating strategies to be optimised in targeted ways, without applying a one-size-fits-all approach across the entire venue. At the same time, a unified platform for light management and monitoring simplifies maintenance planning: runtime data, status alerts, and fault information are centrally available, and early predictive maintenance approaches help avoid unplanned outages and deploy service resources efficiently.

Planning, Operations and Future Development

Planning a modern venue lighting installation today rarely starts with individual

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UEFA: WHEN STADIUMS TURN INTO CONCERTS HALLS

Sound design for the UEFA Champions League final kick-off show. A guest contribution from Kai Zimmermann (UEFA Events SA) and Martin Reich (Audioconsulting AG).

When top international acts take to the stage minutes before the UEFA Champions League final kicks off, for a brief moment, the stadium becomes a concert hall. Millions of viewers around the world experience a high-quality concert production, which seamlessly leads into European club football's flagship final. Behind the scenes, however, these events pose a technical challenge that goes far beyond normal stadium operations.

Football stadiums are primarily designed for sports events. The public address (PA) systems are configured with speech intelligibility, security announcements and evacuation requirements in mind. These are not the systems of international artists such as Lenny Kravitz, Linkin Park or, this year's act, The Killers. Their expectations and those of their production teams are guided by the standards of modern concert tours.

Bringing these two worlds together is one of the main tasks of UEFA Events SA's technical services & overlay (TECH) team.

UEFA Events SA, based in Nyon, is a wholly owned subsidiary of UEFA responsible for the organisation and marketing of all UEFA competitions and events. The TECH team oversees the overall technical coordination of audio technology, air conditioning, broadcast and media power systems, cabling, camera platforms, pitch-view studios and container units, not to mention occupational health and safety measures and technical approval processes.

The UEFA Champions League final kick-off show is one of the team's most demanding projects. It has been produced live since 2026, significantly increasing the demands placed on the technical infrastructure. Not every fixed stadium system can satisfy the expectations of international artists – even if it is only a few years old.

In principle, all stadium PA systems must at least meet the requirements of a certified evacuation system and comply with local regulations. If this cannot be guaranteed, a temporary system will be installed that complies with the requirements of EN 50849 (sound systems for emergency purposes). Today, lots of modern stadiums have efficient systems that are also suitable for sports entertainment purposes. Examples include Wembley Stadium in London, Munich Football Arena, Johann Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam and Puskás Aréna in Budapest.

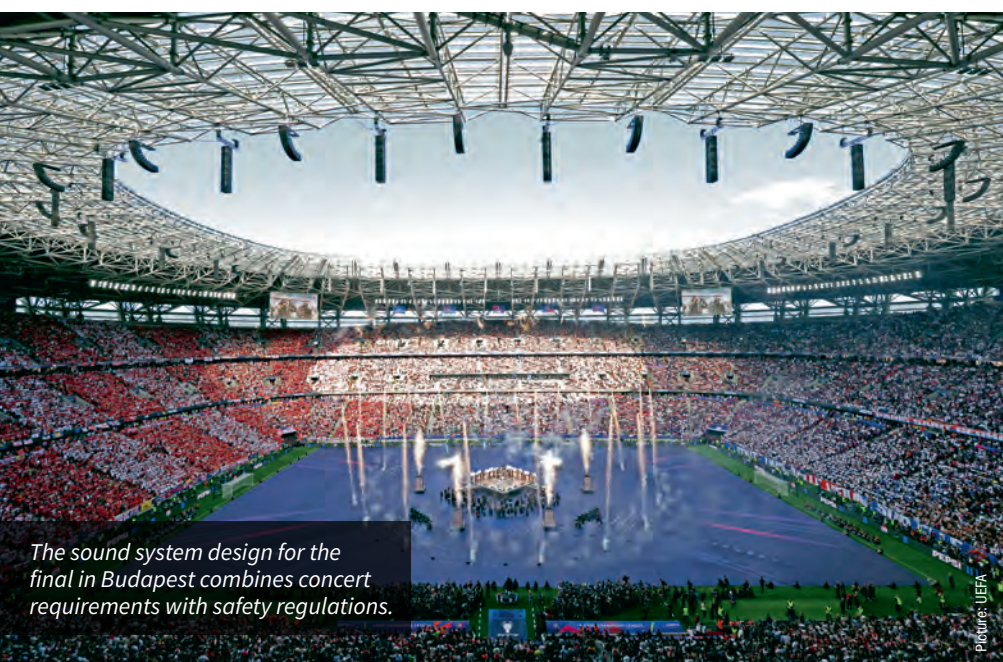
Nevertheless, the requirements of an international concert production often differ significantly from those of a sports event. Tour productions require not only high sound level reserves, but above all, sound characteristics typical of modern concert systems. The differences between stadium and concert PA systems are often considerable, particularly in the low-frequency range. As such, additional subwoofer systems are an integral part of the technical planning at many finals.

The UEFA Champions League final in Budapest serves as an example of the process in action.

The challenge: Ensuring safety and entertainment at the same time

When designing PA systems for major events, safety is always the top priority. Evacuation announcements need to be clearly intelligible even in difficult conditions. According to the relevant standards, the volume of announcements should be at least 10 dB higher than the existing background noise (produced mainly by the audience).

In stadiums at full capacity, this poses a particular challenge. Measurements taken at UEFA and FIFA events regularly show crowd noise levels reaching up to 95 dB



The sound system design for the final in Budapest combines concert requirements with safety regulations.

Picture: UEFA

LAeq for up to 20 minutes at a time. Even higher values may be recorded for shorter durations. At the same time, high noise levels reduce speech intelligibility because of the so-called masking effect.

Based on extensive experience, UEFA has set target noise limits of 105 dB(A) and a crest factor of 12 dB for event planning. This ensures that speech intelligibility and security requirements can be reliably met. Entertainment programmes, on the other hand, are much more flexible and are guided by audience dynamics.

Review of existing systems

UEFA is well acquainted with Puskás Aréna in Budapest. In addition to international finals, the stadium also co-hosted UEFA EURO 2020. UEFA was involved in the design process and was able to contribute important lessons from previous events.

The stadium's PA system consists of 24 d&b line array clusters, each with 12 V8 loudspeakers. An additional four arrays are located behind the giant LED screens. These systems are designed to counterbalance any acoustic shadowing from the LED screens and ensure uniform coverage in all spectator areas.

The event planning process requires that a technical evaluation of the infrastructure be carried out long before a decision on the main artist is made. At this stage, the specific production requirements are often not yet known. As such, planning is initially based on experience from similar productions.

Planning for the final in Budapest began in November 2025 with a comprehensive site visit. The focus was on where additional loudspeaker systems could be integrated into the roof structure. Detailed acoustic simulations were used to determine how many additional subwoofers were needed and where to position them for the best results.

The process was iterative. Acoustic requirements, static conditions and economic factors had to be considered in equal measure in order to develop a solution that was both technically optimal and feasible.

Extra bass for the kick-off show

The simulations showed early on that the existing stadium PA system would not

fully meet the requirements of the show. In particular, additional support was required for the low-frequency range in order to achieve the sound quality expected for an international concert production.

The final rigging plan called for the installation of 24 additional subwoofer clusters. Each cluster consisted of eight subwoofers and weighed around 680kg. They were positioned in such a way as to achieve the most even low-frequency distribution possible over all spectator areas.

Precise sound management across different areas

Another feature of modern stadium PA systems is that not every area has the same acoustic requirements. While spectators expect the sound experience to be as intense as possible, other areas require reduced sound levels. High direct sound levels can significantly impact working conditions in the media sector, commentary boxes and international broadcast production positions and lower the quality of transmissions.



Picture: Kai Zimmermann / UEFA

In these kinds of project, the optimal placement of audio equipment places specific demands on static planning. Turning the simulations into reality tends to be a major challenge in terms of statics.

Additional loads on roof structures must be carefully checked and approved. Fortunately, UEFA club competition finals take place at the end of May. By this time, the snow loads accounted for in the static calculations no longer play a role, meaning that additional reserves can be factored into the evaluation.

The approval process was nonetheless demanding. The final rigging plan was submitted in December 2025 and approved only at the start of April. There would have been little scope for major adjustments at this point, so early and detailed planning was all the more important.

For this reason, modern array processing was used in Budapest. Digital signal processing enabled the team to lower the noise in selected zones without affecting the nearby spectator areas.

The results were remarkable: direct sound levels could be reduced by up to 12 dB in the selected areas. This corresponds to an approximate 50% reduction in the subjective perceived volume. At the same time, the sound experience in the spectator areas was unaffected.

The same technology was used to optimise the distribution of low-frequency noise. Unwanted reflections from the roof structure were minimised and sound radiation outside the stadium was reduced through targeted use of the subwoofers. This kind of sound management is gaining increasing importance, →

particularly in inner-city stadiums near to residential buildings.

High-altitude rigging

Installing the additional subwoofers posed significant logistical and safety challenges for the teams involved.

Before it could be done, additional safety systems had to be fitted. These lifelines, as they are known, enabled safe access to the designated rigging points on the roof structure.

During the detailed planning process, it became clear that some of the planned subwoofer positions could not be used for static reasons. Alternative positions had to be found and evaluated.

The actual set-up took three days and required close coordination between the stadium operator, rigging specialists, the audio team and safety and security officials. Events of this scale clearly demonstrate that sound planning is about more than just selecting the right loudspeakers. It is the complex coordination of acoustics, statics, logistics and safety and security.

When tour productions meet stadium operations

Alongside the PA system, the artists' technical facilities play a central role.

The TECH team handles all production requirements. It is important to balance the needs of the artists, their management, the production companies, the broadcasters and the event organisers.

It is often the case that components of a tour production have to be temporarily integrated into the infrastructure of a football stadium, for which there are usually very detailed requirements. From special mixing console configurations and specific effects processors to vintage elements, the wish list can encompass almost anything seen in an international concert production.

The 2026 UEFA Champions League final was no exception. The goal was to provide the artists with a working environment that corresponded as closely as possible to their usual tour conditions. Given the comparatively short duration of the show, this effort may at first seem excessive. However, if you consider the global reach of the Champions League final, it quickly

becomes clear that high technical quality is an absolute necessity.

Time and time again, the team encounters unique challenges. Some devices are now produced only in small quantities or available only in non-European markets. While digital emulations for many analogue classics exist in the form of plug-ins, these alternatives are not always accepted – in which case an international hunt is often launched for the sought-after device.



Concert requirements differ significantly from those of a sporting event, particularly in terms of sound engineering.

Picture: UEFA

Two productions, one event

The kick-off show is notable for the simultaneous execution of two completely different productions. While the main control room focuses on broadcasting the football match, a concert production with its own requirements has to be coordinated at the same time.

To optimally service both areas, UEFA integrates a separate mobile sound studio into the signal flow. This handles the full audio production of the kick-off show and sends a broadcast-ready signal to the main outside broadcast van, allowing the broadcast crew to focus fully on the match, while still meeting the artist's production requirements.

The result is an efficient production process that meets the high standards of both parties.

Looking ahead

Looking to the future, stadium concepts and technological developments will continue to shape the work of the TECH team.

Take the example of the 2027 UEFA Champions League final, which will be held at Madrid's Estadio Metropolitano. A large-scale

360-degree LED structure has been integrated into the stadium's roof structure. These kinds of installation open up new possibilities for staging, but also pose additional challenges for sound planning.

Although the physical foundations of acoustics remain unchanged, the technologies available are constantly evolving. That is one of the main selling points of these projects – new solutions need to be developed for every stadium, every production and every show.

And this is exactly what makes the technical planning of a UEFA Champions League final so special. For a few minutes, the football stadium becomes a concert hall – and then once again the stage of the biggest match in European club football. ♦

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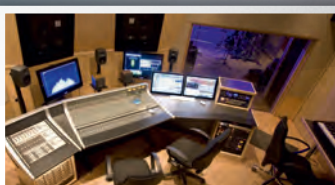
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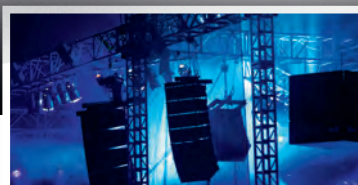
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MANCHESTER UNITED PRESENTS LOCATION FOR NEW STADIUM

Manchester United has confirmed the proposed site for its new 100,000-seat stadium, about 350 metres (1,148 ft) north-west of Old Trafford, as the centrepiece of a wider Trafford Wharfside regeneration plan. The new Stadium District is intended to become a year-round destination for sport, entertainment and community activity, while preserving links to the club's heritage and matchday traditions.

The masterplan, backed by Trafford Council, the Old Trafford Regeneration Mayoral Development Corporation (OTR MDC), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), and Transport for Greater

Manchester (TfGM), includes improved public transport, enhanced rail connections, walking and cycling routes, 15,000 new homes and up to 48,000 local jobs. Club and council leaders say the stadium can act as a catalyst for a transformational neighbourhood.

Trafford Council's Executive Committee formally approved the draft on 20th July 2026, leading to an eight-week public consultation that will run to September 2026, with further fan consultation on stadium design to follow. The final step before adoption is the independent examination, planned for Spring 2027.



NEW 25,000-CAPACITY-ARENA FOR THE PHILIPPINES

SM Seaside Cebu Arena has opened in the Philippines, becoming the largest multifunctional entertainment venue in the Visayas region with capacity for up to 25,000 guests. Developed by SM Prime as part of its South Road Properties vision, the 7 billion Philippine pesos (approx. 99.5m EUR / 114m USD / 85m GBP) venue was designed by Arquitectonica with its exterior defined by wave-shaped glass windows, echoing the signature façade of its sister venue, the SM Mall of Asia Arena.

Connected to SM Seaside City Cebu and future hotel and convention facilities, it anchors a growing tourism and business district. The arena includes Cebu's largest center-hung display, advanced audio-visual systems, 30 Premier Suites, VIP lounges and spaces for concerts, sports, EDM, family shows, corporate events and motorsports.

SURREY, CANADA TO GET 10,000-SEAT CITY CENTRE ARENA

The City of Surrey has reached an agreement in principle to develop the City Centre Arena and Cultural Event Centre, with the Vancouver Giants as anchor tenant. A core part of the larger Entertainment District will be a new Arena and Entertainment Hub which is envisioned to include: an arena with a fixed seating capacity of approximately 10,000 for sports, concerts, and community events; a 175-room hotel with ballroom and conference facilities; 100,000 square feet (9,290 m²) of commercial and office space; and an

enclosed galleria connecting the arena and commercial spaces.

The project will also include a luxury hotel, conference space and housing, helping create a new sports and entertainment district that is hoped to attract investment, support economic growth and expand Surrey's capacity to host major events.

The City Centre Arena and Cultural Event Centre is anticipated to be completed by 2030, with a net estimated cost of 360 million Canadian dollar (approx. 222m EUR / 189m GBP / 254m USD).

CITY OF MÁLAGA DETERMINES LOCATION FOR NEW ROSALEDA STADIUM

The City of Málaga has presented the results of its study into options for a new football stadium or the redevelopment of La Rosaleda, identifying the University expansion area as the preferred site for a 55,000-capacity “New Rosaleda”. The analysis, carried out by Typsa and Fenwick Iribarren with support from Legends Global and Andersen, compared five locations: La Rosaleda, San Cayetano, Lagar de Oliveros, Manzana Verde and the University site.

The first phase assessed physical conditions, accessibility, plot capacity, planning requirements and urban and social integration. Lagar de Oliveros and Manzana Verde were ruled out, while La Rosaleda, San Cayetano and the University plot were examined using 68 measurable indicators. The 66,037-square-metre (710,816 sq ft) University site achieved the strongest result thanks to its advanced

planning status, simpler administration, strong road, bus and metro access, and positive urban integration.

It is also the most cost-effective option. A 55,000-seat stadium there is estimated at 414 million euros (approx. 472m USD / 355m GBP) including VAT, compared with 434 million euros for rebuilding La Rosaleda with 43,000 seats and 588 million euros for San Cayetano. Redeveloping La Rosaleda would also require demolition and erecting a temporary home for Málaga CF.

Further advantages include surface parking at nearby faculties during event times and the best potential to attract private investment. The University site also scored highest for major events, concerts, corporate functions and revenue-generating spaces, making it the fastest, most viable and most commercially attractive option.



FORO FUTECA ANCHORS GUATEMALA'S ARENA SHIFT

Foro Futeca will serve as the operating anchor of Distrito Futeca, a 350 million US-dollar (approx. 307n EUR / 263m GBP) mixed-use development that broke ground in Guatemala City in April 2026. Planned for up to 21,000 spectators in sports mode and 35,000 for concerts and major events, the arena will become Guatemala's largest venue of its kind and expand the country's ability to host sport, culture, corporate and live entertainment formats. The district will cover over 380,000 square-metres (4,1m sq ft) across seven city blocks between Zones 5 and 10, combining the arena with convention halls, auditoriums, an amphitheatre, trade show and conference areas, event infrastructure and public spaces.

The project responds to a capacity gap, with Guatemala estimated to miss out on more than 50 international events each year due to a lack of suitable facilities. Galería Futeca will add 83,000 square-metres (893,404 sq ft) of retail, dining, financial services, sport, wellness and entertainment uses, while a 150-room international hotel and central plaza will support visitors and year-round activity. The site, leased for 50 years from the Military Pension Institute, benefits from road access and dense urban surroundings. Designed by HKS Architects with support from AS Arquitectura, the district aims to attract investment, generate economic activity and open in mid-2030.

CHIEFS UNVEIL RENDERINGS FOR PROPOSED NEW DOME

The Kansas City Chiefs have released renderings for their new 3 billion USD (approx. 2.6bn EUR / 2.3bn GBP) enclosed stadium in Kansas City, Kansas, set to open in 2031. The venue would hold about 70,000 fans and feature a fixed roof with translucent ETFE panels above the field, improving comfort while preserving flyover visibility.

Built to carry forward Arrowhead traditions, it will have a noise-focused bowl, Drum Deck, Ring of Honor, tailgating areas and more than 20,000 parking spaces. Outside, fans will find a plaza with the Lamar Hunt statue, an expanded Hall of Honor and a team store four times larger than today's. The stadium will anchor a mixed-use district.

TRANSFORMATION OF JAMAICA'S NATIONAL STADIUM PLANNED

Ryder Architecture and CAA ICON have unveiled designs for redeveloping Jamaica's National Stadium at Independence Park into a world-class sport and entertainment venue. Commissioned by MCGES and supported by UK Export Finance, the 45,000 square-metre (484,376 sq ft) project will provide 37,500 seats, a nine-lane athletics track, two fan zones,

premium hospitality and a fan boulevard, while expanding to 50,000 capacity for concerts. The masterplan preserves the iconic West Grandstand and aims to support major events, including Jamaica's FIFA Women's World Cup 2031 ambitions. Technical design is set to advance in July 2026, with construction planned for summer 2027.

DELTA CENTER: NEXT STEPS IN TRANSFORMATION

As the ground-up transformation of the Delta Center into a “world-class, dual-sport venue” continues, Smith Entertainment Group (SEG) shared construction details for the 2026 and 2027 offseasons. These changes build on the

ownership group’s vision to take the Delta Center “to the next level as one of the most electric environments in the NBA and NHL”. Planned upgrades include full-sightline seating, new terrace-style end-zone ledges, suspended gondolas,

a completed parking structure, a redesigned south end zone, renovated suites, upgraded concourses, more food, beverage and bathroom capacity, expanded club spaces, plus a new main entrance and outdoor plaza.

SUNCORP STADIUM TO UNDERGO HISTORIC UPGRADE

The Queensland Government will modernise Brisbane’s Suncorp Stadium, independently of the city’s 2032 Olympic venue plans. The 52,500-seat home of the Broncos, Dolphins, Reds and Roar is set for its biggest upgrade in its 23-year

old history. Planned works include higher capacity, giant scoreboards, Australia’s first 360-degree roof-suspended LED ribbon board, media mesh screens at both ends, terraced goal-end areas, safe standing, new bars and entertainment zones. Officials say

the project will improve the fan experience, attract major events and prepare the venue for fixtures such as the 2027 Rugby World Cup. Design has begun, with construction expected in late 2026, and new renderings show the venue’s future look.



Picture: Manchester City

ETIHAD NORTH STAND MOVES INTO OPERATION

Manchester City’s expanded North Stand has passed operational checks and entered full-capacity use as the “Pep Guardiola Stand”, adding more than 7,000 seats plus new ticketing, rail-seat and hospitality areas.

Manchester City has moved the expanded North Stand at the Etihad Stadium into its operational phase after the new

general admission areas passed required checks at a test event at the end of May.

The project has been under development since late 2023 and adds more than 7,000 general admission seats, taking Etihad Stadium’s capacity above 60,000. The expanded North Stand will include at least 3,000 rail seats, with the potential to increase the number depending on demand.

NEW NBA ARENA PROPOSED FOR LONDON’S OLYMPIC PARK

A consortium of property development business Jericho Estates, sports and venues advisory group Torch Sports, CHYBIK + KRISTOF Architects and charity and community gym Peacock Gym has presented plans for the “London Colosseum”, a multi-purpose arena dedicated to professional boxing, esports and a possible NBA Europe franchise. The 25,000-seat venue would be created in the heart of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford, East London. Poised to be the capital’s “most ambitious multi-sport project since the 2012 London Olympics”, the venue is “strategically designed to enhance London’s status as the sporting capital of the world and to serve as a home for three major sports”. The arena would serve as the permanent European home for a possible London NBA franchise, while being equally supported as a premier global destination for world championship boxing and international esports and gaming competitions. According to the consortium, the proposals are drawing interest from major sports investors. At a capacity of 25,000 seats, the arena would overtake Co-op Live as the nation’s largest indoor arena.

WHERE RAIN FALLS AND MUSIC PLAYS – BOGOTÁ'S NEW CONCERT ARENA

In Bogotá, a modular concert arena with a capacity of 45,000 was built at an altitude of 2,600 meters – constructed by NUSSLi in just three months and designed to remain in operation for up to ten years.

Something has changed in Bogotá's concert scene. Where until recently there was no suitable infrastructure for large-scale events, the sprawling U-shaped Vive Claró Arena now stands, with room for around 45,000 spectators. It was built by NUSSLi, an internationally operating company specializing in modular event structures that has already been deployed for Formula 1, the Olympic Games, and renowned open-air festivals worldwide. The opening took place on August 24, 2025: Green Day was the first band to rock the new venue.

Three branches, one project

The project was carried out through close collaboration between the NUSSLi branches in Switzerland, Spain, and Mexico. Speaking on behalf of the project team, Daniela Rugeles summarizes the challenge: "This was our first project of this scale in Colombia. We had to take every detail into account, from climatic conditions to structural engineering." The grandstand structure is based on the proven NUSSLi

system and meets all local earthquake and safety standards.

A technical masterpiece at 2,600 meters

The arena features 17,300 regular seats as well as 1,400 VIP seats in two exclusive sections with separate staircases. Twenty-two concession stands were integrated beneath the grandstands. A requirement that was directly factored into the structural calculations. The high altitude and weather added to the challenges: Bogotá lies at around 2,600 meters above sea level, and rain was a near-daily occurrence. "There were hardly two days without rain. The conditions were challenging, but our team worked with incredible dedication," Rugeles explains. Logistically, the project was also demanding: 70 shipping containers of materials from Europe had to be coordinated, temporarily stored, and deployed with pinpoint precision. Assembly took place from early April to early July 2025.

Up to ten years in operation

Although designed as a temporary structure, the arena will not be dismantled for the time being. The operator, OCESA Colombia, signed a long-term usage agreement with the city of Bogotá. The structure is expected to serve as a permanent venue for national and international concerts for up to ten years. It quickly became clear that the demand was there: On November 1, 2025, Shakira returned to her hometown with her "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran World Tour." Before a sold-out crowd, she performed a program lasting more than two hours that spanned her entire career.

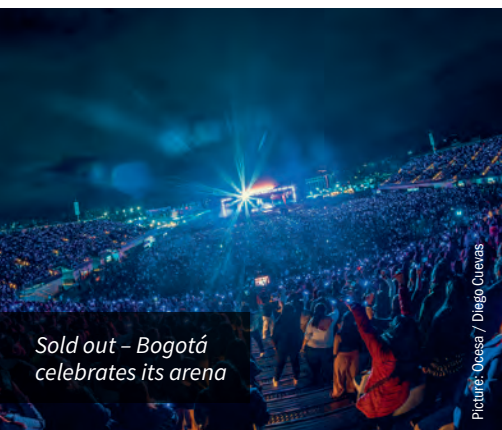


A bird's-eye view of Bogotá's new concert arena

Picture: Ocesa / Diego Cuevas

Expertise, Flexibility, Results

For Danilo Della Ca, COO of Event Structures at NUSSLi, the Bogotá project exemplifies what internationally oriented teamwork can achieve: "Projects like this show what is possible when expertise, passion, and flexibility come together. Our teams have proven that modular engineering expertise sets global standards – even under tropical rain." ♦



Sold out – Bogotá celebrates its arena

Picture: Ocesa / Diego Cuevas

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Barcelona is (re-)building Europe's largest stadium.

CONSTRUCTION REPORT **SPAIN: EUROPE'S CONSTRUCTION HOTSPOT?**

After years of comparatively slow progress in its stadium modernisation efforts, Spain's venue landscape is picking up the pace. The 2030 World Cup on the horizon fuels momentum, yet projects also advance well beyond tournament venues. An overview.

Milos Nenadović, Head of Stadium Revenue at LALIGA's Clubs Office, described the situation bluntly: "we are in the midst of a boom for renovations of our stadiums," triggered by the CVC-backed "Boost LALIGA" programme and the countdown to the 2030 FIFA World Cup. Nenadović highlights two fundamental drivers. The first is financial: "the Boost LALIGA project has aided financially through CVC's investment in many of the recent and ongoing stadium projects in LALIGA," from renovations like Son Moix, El Sadar and Estadio de la Cerámica to incremental upgrades at the Metropolitano or Anoeta. The second is the 2030 World Cup, which has given clubs and public authorities a hard external deadline.

Crucially, almost every new scheme is conceived as a 365-day asset. "The most important topic is how to maximise the revenue from the stadium during 365 days of the year and not just matchdays," Nenadović

stresses, arguing that clubs "cannot depend on football fans to fill our stadiums profitably," and must instead develop products for business, tourism and leisure audiences. The finished new Santiago Bernabéu is a prime example of this. Real Madrid invested nearly 1.5 billion euros (approx. 1.7bn USD / 1.3bn GBP) to convert the stadium into a modern multi-purpose venue – complete with a retractable roof, new façade, a 360-degree LED ring, and a retractable pitch system. In the eternal duel with FC Barcelona, Madrid is now two to three years ahead.

Their Catalan rivals follow a similar plan, reimagining their iconic home stadium with a complete roof and a dense hospitality ring, while retaining Europe's largest stadium capacity of 105,000 once complete. Construction formally began in 2023, with the team spending the 2023/24 and 2024/25 seasons at Montjuïc; phased re-opening at Camp Nou started in late 2025 and is scheduled to culminate in 2027,

subject to licensing and construction progress. With an estimated budget in the region of 1.1 billion euros, the project is financed through a complex long-term debt structure that will be serviced by expanded matchday, hospitality and non-matchday revenues in and around the stadium. The club already raised its revenue forecast for the Spotify Camp Nou due to its hospitality strategy.

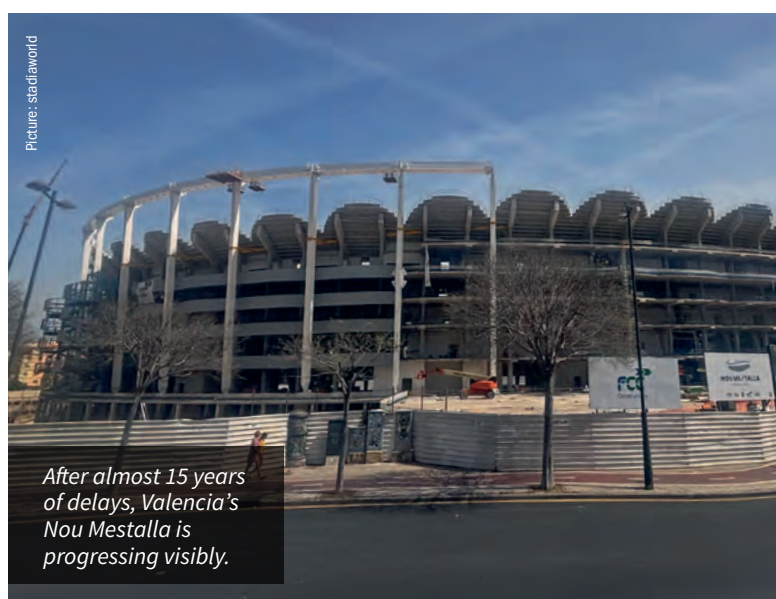
Valencia CF, meanwhile, is compressing 15+ years of delay into a three-year build-out at Nou Mestalla. After construction restarted in January 2025, the club has moved quickly to secure a 322-million-euro financing package, explicitly structured so that “the asset itself, through its future performance, can comfortably service the agreed debt.” The short-term component will be repaid from the sale of the old Mestalla plot, while LaLiga-CVC funds provide additional equity.

The plan now is to open the 70,044-seat Nou Mestalla by July 2027 – potentially around the same time as the fully completed Camp Nou – with around 10% of capacity dedicated to hospitality, extensive non-matchday inventory and a design calibrated for World Cup and major event hosting. In May 2026, work on the facade as well as the installation of auxiliary scaffolding for the roof progressed significantly. As Malaga and A Coruña have retreated from hosting on cost and governance grounds, the RFEF has pushed both Nou Mestalla and Vigo’s Balaídos into the frame as alternative 2030 venues.

Vigo and Las Palmas: Regional Plays for Global Events

The Estadio Abanca Balaídos could be re-positioned under World Cup pressure. The core phased reconstruction – new stands, a compact 30,000-plus bowl and the signature “New Wave” roof – has been ongoing since 2015 on a roughly 60 million euro budget, with completion targeted for 2027. In parallel, the mayor has floated a more ambitious main-stand expansion that would push capacity towards FIFA’s 43,000 threshold, arguing that “New Balaídos will be similar to the Bernabéu or Camp Nou” in ambition even if not in absolute size.

Further south, on Gran Canaria, UD Las Palmas and the Cabildo have taken a more binary decision: step up and co-finance a full upgrade of Estadio de Gran Canaria to a World Cup-capable, 45,000-seat stadium with a complete roof and renewed VIP inventory.



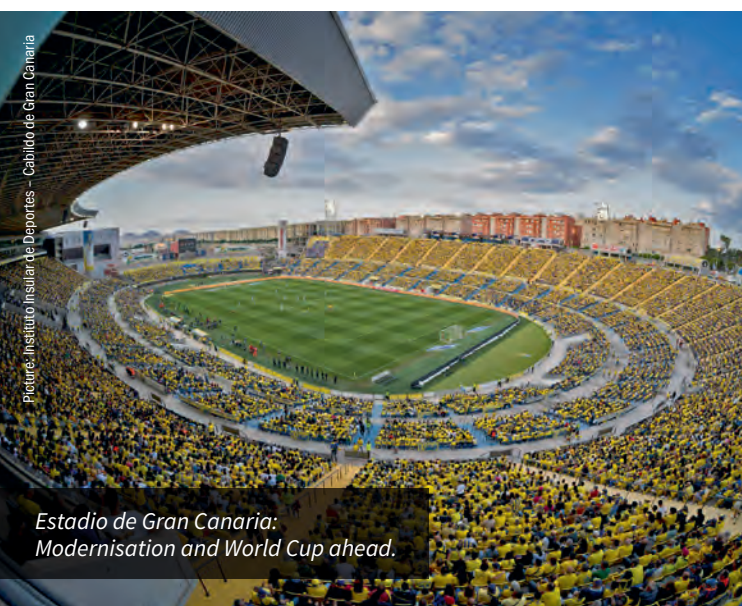
Cost estimates have risen from 114 to 174 million euros following updated ground and construction studies; the club has committed to close the gap in exchange for an enhanced role in the long-term management of the stadium. The tender for the construction project has been issued in June 2026, completion is expected by July 2029.

Further advanced is Zaragoza’s stadium project. The Estadio La Romareda is being completely remodelled for the 2030 World Cup, a project César Azcárate, the architect in charge at IDOM, calls a “completely new stadium”. Being built on the existing site, the old stadium has already been demolished. From the 2024/25 season, Real Zaragoza therefore moved into a new home: a temporary new build, that experts NÜSSL created in just over 100 days. Completion of the new build is scheduled for summer 2027, the Ibercaja Romareda will then feature highly modern hospitality amenities with flexible configurations, a roof that covers every seat, and high focus on sustainability.

Andalusian Ambitions

Spain’s Andalusian region warrants a closer look: While Málaga initially had advanced plans to modernise its stadium and be part of the 2030 World Cup, the mayor had to announce their official withdrawal in July 2025. Málaga City Council, the provincial government, and the Junta de Andalucía, who each own one third of the Estadio La Rosaleda, were not able to compromise on a final project. Instead, in January 2026, the parties launched a new process to identify the best location for a possible new construction or an expansion at the current site. In Seville, meanwhile, all three major stadiums have concrete redevelopment plans.

At Estadio Benito Villamarín, Real Betis will demolish and rebuild the Preferencia Stand while fully refurbishing the other three. The entire stadium will be roofed and a new façade created – designed to reflect the 13 stripes of the club’s green and white crest. Demolition work started in November 2025; construction has now, after initial delays, moved into deep foundation and structural works. Acciona will serve as general contractor after the club revised the original plan to cut costs. The updated roof design will be more functional and modern, saving money without affecting quality. Club Vice President José ➔



Construction report: current stadium projects, Spain

City	Stadium	Team	Start	Opening	Capacity	Action	Costs ¹⁾
A Coruña	Estadio Abanca-Riazor	Deportivo La Coruña	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba
Barcelona	Spotify Camp Nou	FC Barcelona	2022	2027	105,000	Complete rebuild at current location	1,100
Elche	Nuevo Estadio Martínez Valero	Elche CF	2025	2026	31,000	New façade; roof for main stand; expanded VIP and hospitality sectors	40
Granada	Estadio Nuevo Los Cármenes	Granada CF	2026	2030	30,000	New entrances; new façade; new upper tier for all stands; capacity expansion	tba
Las Palmas	Estadio de Gran Canaria	UD Las Palmas	2026	2028/29	45,000	Complete roofing for all stands; capacity increase; new VIP areas	174
Málaga	Estadio La Rosaleda	Málaga CF	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba
San Sebastián	Estadio Anoeta	Real Sociedad de Fútbol	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba
Seville	Estadio Benito Villamarín	Real Betis Balompié	2025	2028	60,000	New façade; complete roofing; multi-use main stand; tripling of VIP spaces; underground car park	170
Seville	Nuevo Ramón Sánchez-Pizjuán	Sevilla FC	2026	2028	55,000	Partial demolition and new construction; capacity increase; complete roofing	350
Seville	Estadio La Cartuja	Real Betis Balompié (temporary)	2024	2025	70,000	Removal of athletics track; capacity increase by 20,000 seats	15
Valencia	Nou Mestalla	Valencia CF	2007	2027	70,044	New construction	450
Valladolid	Estadio José Zorrilla	Real Valladolid	2026	2027	32,000	Capacity increase; new roof; new hospitality spaces	tba
Vigo	Estadio Abanca Balaídos	Real Club Celta de Vigo	2015	2027	30,000+	New façade; complete roofing; adjustment of stand heights	60
Zaragoza	Ibercaja Romareda	Real Zaragoza	2024	2027	43,000	Complete rebuild at current location	145

1) All values in million euro. 1 EUR = 0.87 GBP ≈ 1.17 USD

As of: 04/2026 Source: Cities, Clubs, Stadiums

Miguel López Catalán said the project can now be completed for 170 million euros, with handover of the renovated stadium scheduled for May 2028. The club is playing its home fixtures at La Cartuja through at least the 2026/27 season to keep the site clear.

Spain's unofficial national stadium has just been upgraded by removing the athletics track and increasing capacity to over 70,000. Further roof, VIP and tech upgrades are staged toward 2030 where the stadium will definitely be a host venue. Until then, it might even temporarily host both Sevillian teams.

Across the city, Sevilla FC are advancing their own plans for a completely new Estadio Ramón Sánchez-Pizjuán on the historic Nervión footprint. The IDOM-led 55,000-seat design lowers the pitch to preserve the stadium's intensity, adds a steep, single-tier Gol

Norte "wall", a continuous roof and an expanded hospitality layer. The project is estimated to cost around 350 million euros and will lead to Sevilla having to temporarily relocate to La Cartuja as well.

Projects Outside the World Cup Spotlight

Not every project is framed around 2030. Granada CF has opted for a clearly phased, medium-scale expansion of their stadium. The first phase focuses on re-configured entrances, refreshed façades and a new image – such as reinstating the Los Cármenes arch at the "Puerta de la Afición". Subsequent phases add structurally independent external upper rings until reaching the Preferencia stand, taking capacity towards 30,000 by around 2030.



Also starting in 2026, Real Valladolid will invest in new hospitality areas, circulation improvements and training facilities on the Anexos site, while the municipality roofs the south stand and closes the bowl, raising capacity to around 32,000 by 2027. For co-president Gabriel Solares, the point is as much about utilisation as scale: the Zorrilla should become “a place that is alive every day,” hosting tourism, cultural and corporate events rather than lying dormant between home games.

In A Coruña, the political choice has been even stronger. After years of uncertainty, the city and RC Deportivo have agreed on a “project for decades” at the Riazor complex – consciously renouncing World Cup hosting in favour of an “attenuated” but locally optimised modernisation of the stadium, arena and surrounding facilities. Mayor Inés Rey has emphasised that the objective is “a space that works 365 days a year for A Coruña,” not as a temporary showcase for a one-off tournament.

Across this wave of projects, two main trends stand out: the focus on flexible, large-scale hospitality areas to drive revenue, help finance construction costs, and meet increasing demand. Complete VIP layers or rings such as at the Camp Nou span large areas of the stadium and, at best, can also be used during non-matchdays. In addition to maximizing and diversifying the hospitality segment, stadiums need to be able to function 365 days a year. In most cases, football matches themselves will not sufficiently cover operating, maintenance and financing costs. Additional events, concerts and related activities also help de-risk club financials that can be invested into other parts.

Beyond the physical transformation of stadiums, another trend is quietly becoming standard across the industry: the development of a digital version of the venue alongside the construction process itself. Many stadiums mentioned in this report, including Camp Nou, Nou Mestalla, La Cartuja, Benito Villamarín, and the new Bernabéu, already operate with digital replicas used across ticketing, hospitality, sponsorship, and commercial planning. The stadium is no longer only designed in concrete and steel. It is also designed as a digital commercial asset from day one.



According to Francis Casado, CRO at 3D Digital Venue, a Spanish technology company specializing in digital twins and venue visualisation technology, “This digital layer is becoming increasingly relevant because it allows clubs and venue operators to start generating commercial value long before opening day.” Through digital twins, 3D seat views, and immersive premium experiences, clubs can launch hospitality sales, showcase sponsorship inventory, support financing discussions, and accelerate commercial strategies while the venue is still under construction. In many cases, the 3D digital venue becomes the first operational version of the stadium, helping organisations market and monetise spaces years before fans physically enter the building. This reflects a broader industry shift: stadium development is no longer purely about construction but about building physical and digital ecosystems in parallel. ♦



“LIKE A NEW BEGINNING FOR OUR CITY”

With One New Zealand Stadium, the country opened its new premier venue in April. *stadiaworld* spoke with Venues Ōtautahi Chief Executive Caroline Harvie-Teare about the new stadium, what it means for the operators, and the impact on the City of Christchurch.



Picture: Venues Ōtautahi

After welcoming the public into One New Zealand Stadium at Te Kaha for the first events, what do you personally hope Christchurch residents noticed first about the venue compared with what the city has had since the earthquakes?

HARVIE-TEARE: It's been 15 years since the earthquake forced the closure, and subsequent demolition, of Lancaster Park. Since 2012, Cantabrians have had Apollo Projects Stadium, a temporary stadium built in 100 days. The temporary stadium, a scaffold structure in its entirety, had an initial lifespan of 3-5 years, so it both significantly outlived that while also doing an

incredible job managing to attract major events to the city and while not to the size, scale and volume of what the city can now, it certainly kept the lights on in terms of stadium-scale events here in Ōtautahi.

The temporary nature of Apollo Projects Stadium did however have its quirks and limitations which meant a somewhat challenging and compromised experience for fans and facilities that weren't up to standard for major events.

One New Zealand Stadium is a game changer for our city. It is the premier venue in Aotearoa New Zealand. The stadium is state-of-the-art in every aspect including location, design and functionality.

This means, for locals walking into One New Zealand Stadium, they notice the ease of getting to, in and around the venue, how close the stands are to the field of play, the fact there are no bad

seats in the house and the vibrancy and atmosphere of what is becoming a fortress for sport and a platform for entertainment.

Outside of the venue and importantly so, its location in the centre of Christchurch City has seen bars, restaurants and cafes come alive before and after each event delivering significant economic value and city pride.

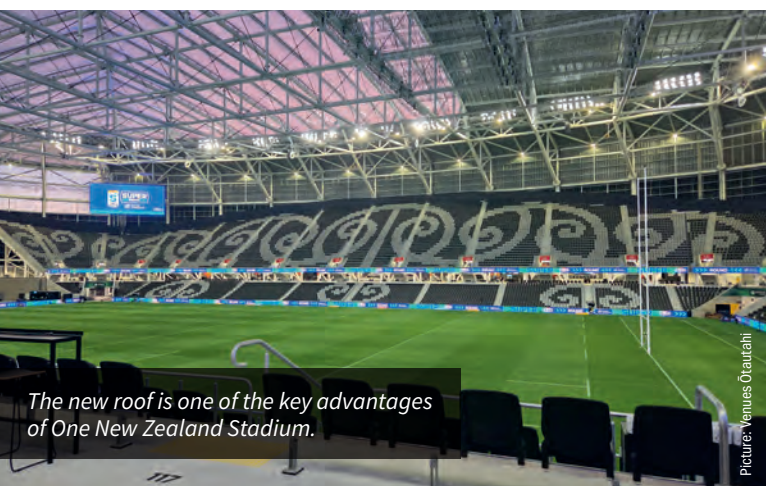
But the other feature which sets the venue apart from most is the permanent roof. Not only does this underpin an electric atmosphere but for Cantabrians who are accustomed to sitting exposed in grandstands as the rain beats in with a cold southerly wind, they are now treated to dry, fully covered seats all year round.

One New Zealand Stadium is described as a bookend to the Canterbury earthquake rebuild and the last of the anchor projects; how does its opening and first major events change Christchurch's positioning in the national and international events market over the next decade?

Harvie-Teare: One New Zealand Stadium's opening has genuinely felt like a new beginning for our city. The earthquakes changed the face of this city and our community. We lost a sense of pride in our place, which has been wholeheartedly renewed. The stadium opening, the city coming together for a host of sold-out events, has felt like a transition in the mood of Ōtautahi, Christchurch to one of positivity and excitement for what's to come. The earthquakes don't define us as a community or our city, but they have allowed us to strategically shape our venues to be the premier location for major events. One New Zealand Stadium is a state-of-the-art facility right in the heart of Christchurch City. It is perfectly positioned to be within walking distance from CBD accommodation providers and our city's wonderful hospitality industry.

Super Rugby Pacific's Super Round brought thousands of event-goers across three days as the first major test of the stadium and precinct; what were you most focused on operationally for that weekend, how successful did it go from an operator and city perspective?

Harvie-Teare: Opening One New Zealand Stadium, we had a very simple target of getting as many people through the venue as possible. This is a community venue, and one proudly so, and we want to make sure our community feel connected to their place. We wanted to see our gates flowing, our collection of local food and beverage partners busy and stands packed with cheering fans. Super Round was a phenomenal success.



The new roof is one of the key advantages of One New Zealand Stadium.

Picture: Venues Ōtautahi

"The stadium is state-of-the-art in every aspect"

Three sold out days saw almost 75,000 people come to the Stadium and over 13 million NZ-dollar in economic benefit delivered to the city. The Community Open Day the following week followed it up with another 32,000 people.

Through our first seven weeks, every event at the stadium has sold out, with over a quarter of a million guests through, and the public feedback has been exceptional. The open continuous concourse lined with local food vendors and the seating bowl positioned close to the playing field with excellent sightlines have been fan highlights.

From an operator's perspective, how will the event mix at One New Zealand Stadium differ from the existing venue portfolio in Christchurch?

Harvie-Teare: One New Zealand Stadium is a truly multi-use venue which gives us a huge amount of flexibility. We expect to host about 180 events in the first full year of operation at the stadium with between 20-30 being ticketed events and the balance being business and private events. We expect to see continued growth in event numbers, underpinned by the benefit of having a roofed venue, not impacted by the weather and the ability to host events year-round.

With the technology and size of the venue, we are able to attract some of the biggest events in the country. For years, these events skipped visiting our city, now we're at the top of the list.

Venues Ōtautahi is substantially scaling up its casual workforce to staff One New Zealand Stadium; what does that mean for service standards, training, and the way you want the "One New Zealand Stadium" experience to feel for different audience segments, from GA through to premium hospitality?

HARVIE-TEARE: We almost doubled our casual workforce ahead of the opening of One New Zealand Stadium with now just under 900 casual staff employed. Our team was strategic in how we trained staff to ensure our Venues Ōtautahi standards were upheld. We used events at our other venues, Wolfbrook Arena, Christchurch Town Hall, Hagley Oval, Air Force Museum of New Zealand and Apollo Projects Stadium as opportunities to train our staff and get our rapidly growing workforce event experience prior to the first event at the Stadium.

One New Zealand Stadium



Operator:	Venues Ōtautahi
Owner:	Christchurch
Construction start:	April 2022
Opening:	April 2026
Costs:	657m NZD (approx. 341m EUR / 401m USD / 297m GBP)
Architects:	Populous / Warren and Mahoney
Involved firms (selection):	Te Kaha Project Delivery Limited
Capacities:	30,000 (36,000 max. for concerts); 23 suites (10 to 60 pax); Ōtautahi Lounge and Terrace (892 seats)

The naming-rights partnership with One New Zealand sits alongside strong expectations on digital connectivity and smart-venue capability; what are your priorities for using technology to improve both guest experience and operational efficiency?

Harvie-Teare: Being New Zealand's premier venue, it was always important for us to get the technology piece right. The stadium features 300 digital screens, 760m of LED ribbon board signage, 220 cameras and 17 concert-quality speaker systems.

We partnered with leading providers to redevelop our websites with Plato Creative, our stadium mobile application with FanReach and our interactive digital wayfinding map with PAM.

And with One New Zealand onboard as our naming rights partner, connectivity was key. One New Zealand worked with Kordia and other key mobile network providers Spark and 2 Degrees to install a DAS system to ensure great mobile connectivity, even when the stadium is packed with 37,000 guests.



Harvie-Teare hopes to host 180 events in the first 12 months.

A NEW LANDMARK FOR OKC

The City of Oklahoma City and the Thunder have broken ground on Continental Coliseum, a new downtown NBA arena designed to replace Paycom Center, strengthen the city's major-league status and "serve as a civic gathering place for decades".

Continental Coliseum, the future home of the Oklahoma City Thunder, is planned as a publicly owned, NBA-caliber arena in the heart of downtown. The building is scheduled to open in summer 2028 and will replace Paycom Center, which will remain in use until the new venue is ready. For the City, the project is both a sports-infrastructure investment and a long-term urban-development statement.

come real once the building begins to rise above street level.

"The project is on schedule and in budget," Todd says. "We are still working through final design. We look forward to the start of structural steel and the glass curtain wall. That will really signal to everyone that the project is progressing and they can see the scale of the building."

That glass curtain wall is central to the architectural concept. The arena is planned with a 360-degree transparent exterior,

print, creating a pre-event and event-day threshold between the public realm and the bowl.

Inside, the design focus is firmly on basketball. The coliseum is planned with optimised sight lines and a seating configuration intended to create a loud, close and energetic environment. Modern arena design is no longer simply a matter of adding more seats. The contemporary benchmark is a mix of intimacy, circulation, premium inventory, back-of-house efficiency and event flexibility.

More Space, More Premium, More Function

Compared with Paycom Center, the functional step forward is intended to be visible across almost every area of operation.

"This new arena will provide upgrades and additions in almost all areas," Todd says. "Among the most important changes are larger and more functional loading areas, better accommodation for performing artists and the basketball team, a larger main concourse and improved food and beverage infrastructure."

For the average visitor, one change may stand out in particular: the upper concourse. In many older arenas, the upper level is the compromise level – tighter circulation, fewer amenities, and a different food and beverage experience than the lower bowl. Continental Coliseum is intended to reduce that gap.

Premium and hospitality spaces are also a defining part of the project. For NBA arenas, premium products are no longer limited to traditional suites. Clubs, loge seating, scalable group products and flexible hospitality areas are central to revenue generation and to keeping a venue competitive across a 25- or 30-year lifecycle.

"The City aims to build an arena that puts Oklahoma City at the forefront of the



The future site of the Continental Coliseum shortly after "groundbreaking" in April 2026.

"The new arena will provide a focal point and a central gathering place downtown for many years to come," MAPS Program Manager David Todd said. "It will become, because of its size and importance, an iconic Coliseum which will be representative of the City's image."

The public has already seen the site clear, but the next visible phase will change the perception of the project. For many residents, Continental Coliseum will be-

opening views from the concourses to the city and from the city back into the activity of the building. Rather than treating the arena as a closed event box, the design aims to make it part of the downtown experience.

The main visual identity is deliberately oriented west, toward Myriad Botanical Gardens. At street level, the arena is planned to include Thunder Alley as an activation zone within the building foot-



NBA,” Todd says. “Modern arena design prioritises experience and premium amenities over seat count and size alone.”

Accordingly, the design direction is not only to maximise inventory, but to keep it flexible. “We directed the design team to build a flexible hospitality ecosystem that includes luxury suites, club style and other scalable options to meet the desires of the fans and are competitive with other peer NBA markets.”

A Downtown Arena With a Transit Horizon

Continental Coliseum is also being planned with a long-term mobility question in mind. Approximately 1.4 acres (4,047 m²) of the site are reserved for a potential future intercity transit hub. That decision is already shaping the arena’s footprint, orientation and edge conditions.

“Oklahoma City’s long-term transportation vision has fundamentally shaped how we are designing the new arena,” Todd says. The area along E.K. Gaylord Boulevard, next to Santa Fe Station, is being protected as a possible future multimodal hub. “We ensure that a future regional commuter rail can seamlessly plug into the Continental Coliseum’s doorstep.”

More Than Thunder Games

As with Paycom Center, the new arena is intended to function well beyond the

NBA calendar. Concerts, family shows, rodeo, graduations, private assemblies and other large-format events are all part of the expected operating profile.

Continental Coliseum



Operator:	Legends Global
Owner:	City of Oklahoma City
Main tenant:	Oklahoma City Thunder
Construction start:	March 2026 (groundbreaking) / April 2025 (demolition)
Opening:	Summer 2028
Costs:	900m USD (790m EUR / 677m GBP)
Architects:	MANICA / TVS
Involved firms:	Flintco / Mortensen (construction); CAA Icon / ADG Blatt (professional management services)
Capacity:	tba
Size:	750,000 sq ft (69,677 m ²)

“The arena will be available, as the existing Paycom is, for events such as rodeo, kids shows, graduations, private assembly or any other event requiring a large number of seats,” Todd says.

For Continental Coliseum, the sustainability strategy is being approached pragmatically, within the limits of the project budget. “We are trying to be as conscious of energy efficiencies as we

can given a finite budget,” Todd says. “The exterior is high performance glass, all lighting is LED, substantial landscaping helps with the heat footprint of the building.”

Keeping the Building Current

The goal is to avoid the familiar cycle in which a venue opens as state-of-the-art, then falls behind its peer set after 10 or 15 years because there is no clear mechanism for reinvestment. For Oklahoma City, success will not be measured only by the first Thunder game or the first major concert. It will be measured by whether the arena remains busy, relevant and well-regarded by the public.

“Success will be a facility that is very active and considered by the public as a great place to see a game or a show,” Todd says. “Success will be a public dialog that agrees that the city needed this upgrade and the wait was worth the result.”

For now, the project sits at the transition point between demolition, final design and vertical construction. Once steel and glass rise on the former Myriad site, the scale of the investment will become visible. By 2028, Oklahoma City expects Continental Coliseum to become more than a new home for the Thunder. It is intended to be a downtown landmark, a major event platform and a public building that reflects the city’s next stage of growth. ♦

SCOTIA PLACE: CALGARY'S NEW EVENT CENTRE

With the steelwork for the roof advancing and district works underway, Calgary's arena project, valued at 1.22 billion CAD, is set to become both a venue replacement and an anchor for urban development.

Scheduled to open in fall 2027, the new Scotia Place will replace the Scotiabank Saddledome as Calgary's principal indoor sports and entertainment venue. It is planned as the future home of the city's NHL, AHL, WHL and NLL teams, while also targeting major concerts, community sport, entertainment productions and non-sport programming.

"Scotia Place represents a major civic reinvestment, replacing an aging facility with a modern venue designed for long-term community use," a Scotia Place project-team representative says. "It strengthens the Culture + Entertainment District as a year-round destination and supports Calgary's broader cultural and economic objectives." The City of Calgary will own Scotia Place, while Calgary Sports and Entertainment Corporation will lease, maintain and operate the

venue. CAA ICON is managing delivery, HOK-DIALOG leads design, and CANA/Mortenson is executing construction.

Embedded in the District

Scotia Place occupies a 10-acre (40,469 m²) site in East Victoria Park, within Calgary's Culture + Entertainment District, with the main event and ice surfaces set around 11 metres (63 ft) below grade. This allows for street-level access and strengthens the connection between the venue, the Esso Community Arena, the plazas, and the surrounding streets. "From the outset, the team defined a project that balanced creative ambition with functional needs," the representative says. "By setting the building into grade, the main concourse connects directly to street level, improving accessibility and supporting food, beverage,

and retail uses that activate the site throughout the day."

The venue will include indoor and outdoor public plazas, a 1,000-seat community arena, food and beverage destinations, retail frontage and future development opportunities. The plazas are planned for daily public use and larger activations, with capacity for up to 3,000 people in everyday use and up to 5,000 when configured as an event space or festival street.

Construction Progress

Construction began in July 2024. By late 2025, the project had moved from excavation and foundations to visible above-grade structures. Key works included more than 1,100 structural piles, underground walls, columns, stairwells, elevator cores, utility infrastructure and a connection to Calgary's District Heating System. Structural steel installation began in October 2025.

In March 2026, the first major roof truss was installed. The 79-tonne element measured 56 metres (184 m) long and 12 metres (39 m) high. Once complete, the roof structure is designed to support up to 181 metric tonnes of lighting, sound and event equipment – significantly more than the Saddledome's 40.8 metric tonnes. By May 2026, additional roof trusses had been placed across the main venue seating bowl, spanning the full 104 metres (341 m) of the venue. Work was also progressing on the upper concourse and suite level, precast concrete, roofing above restaurant and retail areas, exterior drywall and the south-side cauldron form.

"Since breaking ground in 2024, Scotia Place has progressed from early works into visible vertical construction," the project-team representative says. "Excavation and foundations are complete, structural steel installation is advancing, and the building's

The finished Scotia Place is expected to open by fall 2027.



Picture: Photo provided by the City of Calgary



form is now clearly emerging.” The next critical stages are roof completion, building enclosure and interior construction. “Once the roof and enclosure are in place, systems installation, detailed interior work, and public realm construction can progress in parallel.”

Design, Accessibility, Sustainability

At opening, Scotia Place is expected to seat 18,400 for sporting events and up to 20,000 for concerts and other events. “Scotia Place integrates a full community rink with dedicated team spaces, while additional change rooms in the main building allow the venue to operate as a high-level tournament facility and support multiple events at once,” the representative says. “Dedicated dressing rooms, green rooms, and a shared loading dock enable the building to host sports, concerts, and entertainment events.”

Accessibility is embedded in the venue concept. The below-grade event-surface strategy supports fully accessible street-level entrances, while the design includes accessible and companion seating across all levels, widened circulation, adaptable suites, assistive listening technology, mobility-device storage and accessible administrative areas.

Scotia Place is also planned with 8 flex washrooms, alongside universal washrooms, adult-size change tables, ceiling lifts, emergency call systems, quiet rooms, sensory kits, parenting rooms and service-animal relief areas. The community arena

is designed with inclusive change rooms and adaptability for sledge hockey.

Scotia Place

Operator:	Calgary Sports and Entertainment Corporation
Owner:	City of Calgary
Construction start:	July 2024
Opening:	Fall 2027
Costs:	1,223bn CAD (approx. 913m USD 780m EUR / 677m GBP)
Max. Capacity:	18,400 (hockey) 20,000 (concerts and events)
Premium seating:	54 suites, 36 loge/ terrace tables, 18 theatre boxes, 3 ice suites
Size:	1,155,000 sq. ft. (107,300 m ²)
Accessibility features (selection):	Flex wash rooms, sensory rooms, hearing technology, service animal relief areas

On sustainability, Scotia Place is pursuing LEED Certified, and current design work is tracking toward LEED Silver through good design principles. This aligns with Calgary’s target of net-zero emissions by 2050. The project includes more than 600 solar panels, low-flow fixtures expected to reduce indoor water use by 35 %, and energy performance designed to be 30 % better than applicable national energy codes. It will also connect to the District Heating

System and includes design measures for future electrification, extreme heat, wildfire smoke, flooding and severe weather.

For other cities and venue authorities, Scotia Place highlights the importance of early governance clarity in large-scale arena replacements.

“Clear definition of programme, scope, and partner accountabilities was essential from the outset,” the representative says. “Establishing responsibilities early aligned expectations and supported smoother decision making across a complex delivery model.” Experienced delivery partners were also important. “Their expertise helped anticipate challenges, streamline coordination, and maintain momentum through planning and early construction.”

As arena projects are asked to deliver professional sport, event attraction, accessibility, sustainability, public realm and district regeneration, Scotia Place illustrates both the opportunity and complexity of contemporary venue development.

With roof steel advancing, the bowl defined and interior works approaching, the next 18 months will determine how effectively Calgary’s new event centre translates its civic and operational ambitions into a working venue. As the project-team representative says, “Watching the structure rise has been notable both from a construction perspective and as a Calgarian, as the building’s form and future user experience become increasingly clear.” ◆



Unipol Dome: The official opening in early May showcasing the multipurpose focus.

Picture: CTS EVENTIM AG & Co. / G&A / Arla Ruffini

CITY FOCUS MILAN: IN TRANSITION

New arena, new stadium, new momentum? With the freshly inaugurated Unipol Dome and finally advancing plans for the San Siro, Milan's venues landscape is evolving – not just because of the Winter Olympics 2026. A closer look.

Milan is Italy's economic heart and one of Europe's key metropolises. Having just hosted one of the world's major sporting highlights with the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, the city is also evolving at venue level: with the freshly inaugurated Unipol Dome and concrete plans for one of the world's most iconic stadiums – the San Siro – it's time for a closer look.

For the Olympic Games, a new large-scale arena was built in the city's south-east. Initially known as PalaItalia, during the Olympics as the "Milano Santa Giulia Ice Hockey Arena," it is now called the

"Unipol Dome." With a sports capacity of around 14,700 to 16,000, it is the largest arena in the city. Operator CTS EVENTIM positions it as "Italy's most innovative and sustainable indoor arena," combining architectural and technical excellence with a comprehensive digital strategy. During the Winter Olympics in February 2026, the venue hosted the main ice hockey competitions, including both the men's and women's tournaments, followed immediately by the entire para ice hockey competition.

Following the conclusion of the Games, the arena was fully transitioned into its long-term use in live entertain-

ment and sports operations, with the aim of becoming a central venue for major shows, international tours, and major sporting events. High-quality premium and hospitality areas are an integral part of the concept, underlining the ambition to deliver a first-class experience for artists, organisers, and fans alike. The official opening of the Unipol Dome took place on May 6 with a concert by Italian rock star Ligabue – a deliberate transition from its Olympic debut to "a new chapter in Milan's cultural and urban life."

After years of discussions about rebuilding, relocation, or renovation, the City of Milan and its two football clubs

have finally agreed on a definitive course of action regarding the Giuseppe Meazza Stadium. The home ground of Inter and AC Milan – also the venue for the opening ceremony of Milano Cortina 2026 earlier this year – was sold to the two clubs in September 2025, along with the surrounding land.

The clubs now plan to construct a new stadium in immediate vicinity, after which the historic venue will likely be demolished by more than 90%. The administrative process for the project began in March 2026, and detailed planning is currently underway for a new stadium with a capacity of around 70,000–72,000, including infrastructure upgrades and a large-scale district development featuring green spaces and commercial areas. Respective new-build plans in the Milan suburbs of San Donato (AC Milan) and Rozzano (Inter) have thus been abandoned.

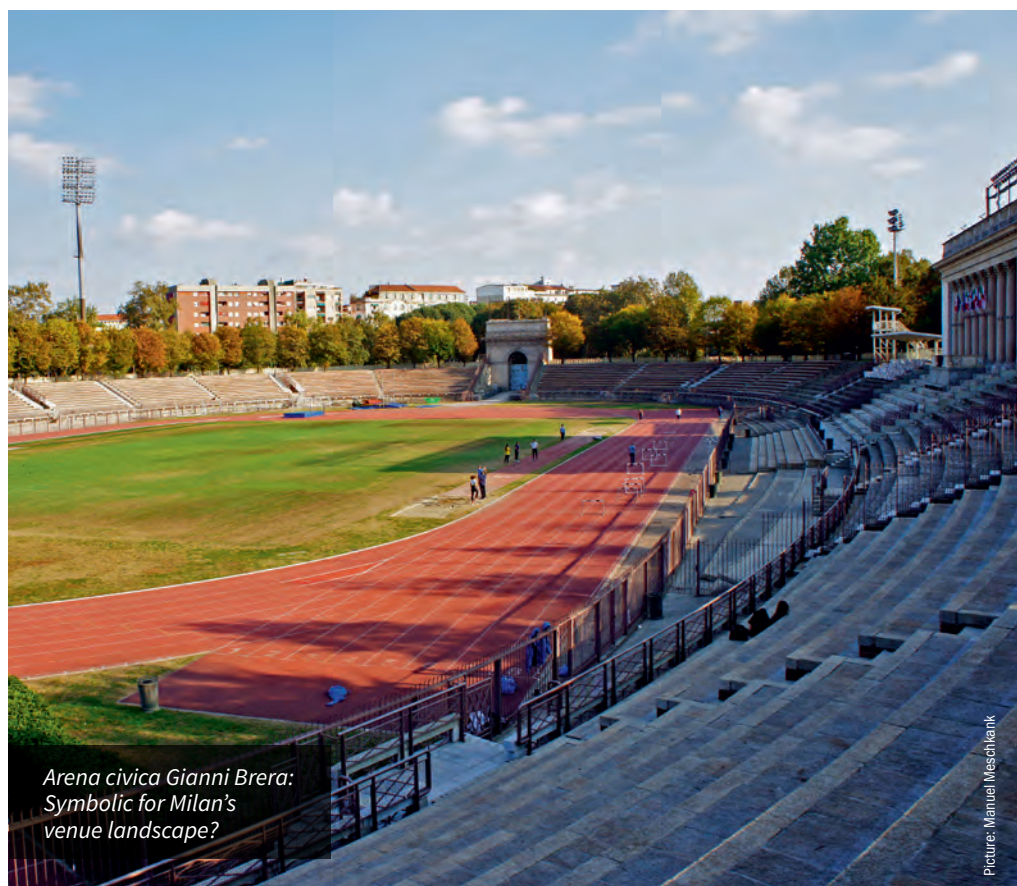
The “Old” Arenas

Until the Olympics, the Unipol Forum (formerly Forum di Milano/Forum di Assago) was the most important multi-purpose arena in the greater Milan area. Opened in 1990, it was awarded the European Architecture Prize for Sports Facilities just four years later for its particularly innovative design. With a capacity of 15,800, it has always been a key destination for both top-level sports (initially hosting top teams in ice hockey and basketball) and concerts. The arena has hosted international indoor tennis tournaments, world championships in boxing, figure skating, volleyball, and ice hockey, as well as EuroBasket 2022 and the EuroLeague Final Four. It remains the home of Olimpia Milano (now “EA7 Emporio Armani Milano”). During the Olympics, it operated as the “Milano Ice Skating Arena” and hosted all figure skating and short-track events.

Another mid-sized venue is the Allianz Cloud (formerly PalaLido) in northwest Milan, which served as the home of Olimpia Milano before the Unipol Forum. Originally opened in 1961, the arena was comprehensively modernised between 2011 and 2019 and now has a capacity of around 5,500 seats. The roof and façade were completely renewed and equipped with photovoltaic systems, while the interior was designed for maximum →



*Unipol Forum:
Like many Milan venues an
architectural eye-catcher.*



*Arena civica Gianni Brera:
Symbolic for Milan's
venue landscape?*

flexibility and high standards of inclusion and accessibility. Today, the venue hosts first-division volleyball team Powervolley Milano and second-division basketball club Urania Basket Milano, and is also designed for handball, tennis, gymnastics, boxing, para-sports, padel, wrestling, as well as trade fairs and conferences.

Even more historic is the Arena civica Gianni Brera in Parco Sempione. Opened in 1807, it is one of the most significant examples of neoclassical architecture in Milan. For decades, it hosted major football and rugby matches – Inter played its home games here from 1930 to 1947 – and today it primarily serves as a venue for women’s football, occasional rugby union matches, concerts, cultural events, and the annual athletics meeting “Notturmo di Milano.” Depending on configuration, capacity ranges between approximately 10,000 and 30,000 spectators. In a way, the stadium is symbolic for Milan’s venue landscape: Venerable, rich in tradition, and still in use – yet nowhere near modern standards.

Trade Fair, American Football, Motorsport

The Velodromo Vigorelli is another outdoor stadium in the city. It is currently used mainly for American football events; within the athletics track, a full-size artificial turf football field has been installed. In 2013, it hosted the IFAF European Championship of American Football. Today, it serves as the home venue for the Seamen Milano and Rhinos Milano, with a capacity of around 9,000 spectators.

As is now common for major international events, the Milan Exhibition Centre (Fiera Milano) can also be temporarily converted into sports infrastructure. For the Winter Olympics, it was transformed into the “Milano Ice Park,” serving as a temporary venue for speed skating and parts of the women’s ice hockey tournament. Technically, a speed skating oval over 400 metres long was integrated into existing exhibition halls, including temporary stands and all sport-specific infrastructure.

Finally, just under 20 kilometers outside the city lies the Autodromo Nazionale Monza, one of the most historic permanent racing circuits in the world and a regular host of the Italian Grand Prix since 1950. The Italian Grand Prix has also been confirmed on the World Championship calendar for 2026, running from 4 to 6 September, and the contracts secure Monza’s status as the sole Italian Formula 1 venue until at least 2031. With its large natural grandstands and temporary spectator facilities, the Autodromo regularly hosts six-figure crowds, making it an essential part of the wider sports and events landscape of the Milan metropolitan area.

With its new multi-purpose arena, Milan has taken an initial step into the modern era. The new vision for San Siro, although bittersweet, is long overdue and will provide the city with a stadium that matches its reputation both nationally and in Europe. Beyond that, the cityscape is still largely defined by historic venues; well maintained, but not necessarily renovated to state-of-the-art standards. ♦

San Siro: One of the most iconic stadiums in Europe is about to be demolished.



Pictures: stadiaworld



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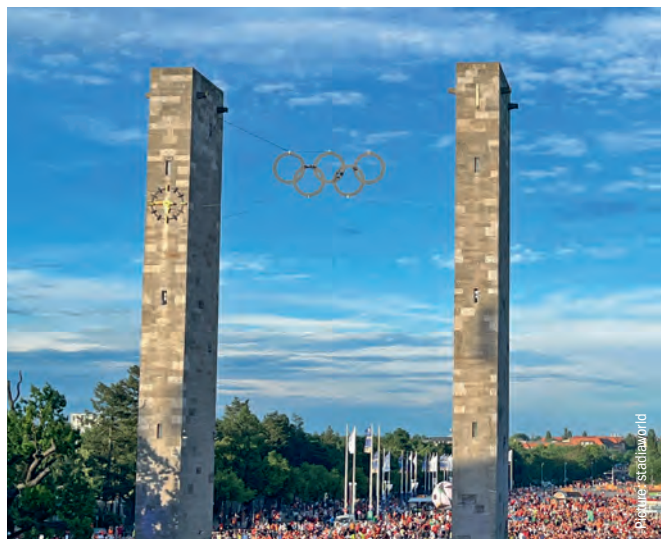


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ATTENDANCE FIGURES FOR FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

With the expanded tournament format and more matches scheduled than ever before, a new attendance record was guaranteed even before the FIFA World Cup 2026 had started. In the end, a total of 6,810,966 people made their way to the 16 venues; 69 matches were officially sold out, including 26 of the 32 knockout matches. An average attendance of 65,490 people resulted in an average stadium occupancy rate of 99.73 %. The previous attendance record for a FIFA World Cup (1994, also in the US: 3.6 million) was easily surpassed and even exceeds the combined total attendance of the last two World Cups, in 2018 and 2022. More than 8.5 million fans also attended the official FIFA Fan Festivals in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

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You can find the detailed data incl. attendance figures and rates for each stadium online at stadiaworld.com

IOC ANNOUNCES TIMELINE FOR AWARDING 2036 SUMMER OLYMPICS

The IOC has confirmed the timeline for awarding the 2036 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, with the host expected to be elected in mid-2029. Interested cities and regions include German candidates Munich, Berlin and CologneRhineRuhr, Ahmedabad in India, Qatar, South Korea's North Jeolla Province, Santiago de Chile, Istanbul and Saudi Arabia. Northern England may also explore a future bid, though likely for the 2040s.

At the 146th IOC Session in Lausanne, members approved a revised selection process with a new Strategic Dialogue stage. For the 2036 Games this means: In March 2027, the IOC Executive Board will shortlist interested parties from the Continuous Dialogue pool. They must submit initial questionnaire responses and core financial guarantees, while receiving technical support and site visits from the

Future Host Commission. In late 2028, the IOC will open Targeted Dialogue with Preferred Hosts, who will update submissions and provide full legal and financial guarantees. A final report will then go to IOC Members before candidates are put forward for election in mid-2029.

The IOC says the reforms will give bidders and governments clearer timelines and support more careful assessment. Further changes were also agreed: future hosts may add only four locally influenced sports at Summer Games and two at Winter Games to control programme growth. The IOC also announced a new "Fit for the Future Olympian Grant", offering eligible Olympians 10,000 US dollars (approx. 8,733 EUR / 7,494 GBP) for sporting careers or career transitions. Milano Cortina 2026 athletes will be the first beneficiaries, with payments planned from 2027.

TURIN: ALLIANZ STADIUM EXPANDS ITS CONCERT ROLE

Allianz Stadium in Turin has completed its first concert season, strengthening its role as a major live entertainment venue alongside football.

Across seven June shows, the stadium welcomed more than 250,000 spectators for Rockin'1000, Tiziano Ferro, Max Pezzali, Ligabue, Sfera Ebbasta and Eros Ramazzotti. The programme tested the venue's ability to switch quickly from match operations to large-scale concert production,

with the club highlighting logistics, acoustics, visibility and facilities. The venue's commercial and hospitality ecosystem also registered measurable uplift. JHotel, located close to the stadium, reported average occupancy above 80 % during a month in which occupancy has historically remained below 50 %. Concert-driven demand accounted for more than 2,400 room nights and brought the hotel's total guest count to nearly 3,500.



UK SPORT TO EXAMINE POSSIBLE OLYMPICS BID

The UK government has commissioned its expert arm's-length body UK Sport to carry out an initial strategic assessment of whether an Olympic and Paralympic Games could be hosted in the North of England in the 2040s. The review is an early-stage exercise and will decide whether the idea should progress to a detailed technical feasibility study covering cost, benefits and viability. Ministers see major sporting events as “a way to accelerate regeneration, economic growth, local pride and the UK’s global appeal”. Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy said London 2012 proved the power of the Games to “inspire, attract investment and showcase Britain”, and argued that the North should no longer be seen as “too small or unsuitable” for an Olympics. Any formal bid decision would ultimately rest with the British Olympic Association and British Paralympic Association.

The announcement forms part of a wider government push to use sport and events as engines of local development. A new Stadium Regeneration Accelerator will bring together departments, sporting bodies, leagues and investors to support priority stadium and sports infrastructure projects. The programme will not directly fund stadium regeneration, but will help clubs and authorities unlock opportunities linked to housing, jobs, apprenticeships, transport upgrades and community sports facilities. DCMS will work with the Office for Investment, HM

Treasury, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Premier League, English Football League and Women’s Super League. Potential projects include locations in Greater Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Leeds, Liverpool and London, with the government also looking to international best practice.

A new Sporting Events Bill is planned to make it easier to bid for, secure and deliver major events, including UEFA EURO 2028. It is expected to reduce bureaucracy, create commercial opportunities for event owners and criminalise unauthorised ticket resale for designated major events, helping more fans buy tickets at face value. The government will also publish a cross-sector UK Government Strategy for Major Events within the next year, covering sporting, cultural and business events and aiming to boost economic growth, soft power and social cohesion.

Lord McConnell, who helped bring the 2014 Commonwealth Games to Glasgow, has been appointed Ministerial Adviser on Soft Power and Major Events. He will support efforts to position the UK as a leading destination for major sporting and cultural events. The country already expects a strong line-up, including the 2026 ICC Women’s T20 World Cup, 2026 European Athletics Championships in Birmingham, 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, the 2027 Tour de France and Tour de France Femmes Grands Départs, and UEFA EURO 2028.



NFL: MORE INTERNATIONAL GAMES

NFL owners have approved an increase in International Games to ten from the 2027 season, the maximum currently allowed under the collective bargaining agreement with the NFL Players Association (NFLPA), after nine games across four continents in 2026.

The league aims to keep expanding global markets, with Asia and Japan mentioned as future options. It was also decided that NFL franchises will no longer be able to protect two of their games from being played internationally.

2030 IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN HELSINKI AND RIGA

The 2030 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship will be hosted by Helsinki, Finland, and Riga, Latvia, after their bid was approved with 98.23 % of the vote. Helsinki will serve as the main venue and stage the final weekend, with both countries hosting up to the quarter-finals. The upcoming men’s top division tournament calendar looks as follows: 2027: Dusseldorf and Mannheim, Germany; 2028: Paris and Lyon, France; 2029: Bratislava and Kosice, Slovakia; 2030: Helsinki, Finland and Riga, Latvia.

“THE NATURAL HOME FOR THE WORLD’S BIGGEST AND BEST EVENTS”

In an extensive interview, Mark Lynch, Stadium Director, Wembley Stadium, speaks with stadiaworld about last year’s record concert season, the stadium’s event portfolio, and its latest infrastructure investments.



Picture: The FA

If you look back over the last 18 months at Wembley, which moments best capture what the stadium stands for today?

LYNCH: The defining characteristic of Wembley today is our range and variety of events.

Mark Lynch

Over the past 18 months, we’ve experienced an exceptionally diverse calendar: delivering both England men’s and women’s international fixtures, the Emirates FA Cup, The EFL play offs (including the Championship play off final, the ‘richest game in football’), alongside Capital’s Summertime Ball, sold-out tours with artists like Dua Lipa, Lana Del Rey, Guns ‘n’ Roses, Linkin Park and Blackpink.

We also hosted Oasis and their Live 25 reunion tour and of course Coldplay with a record breaking 10-night residency. If that was not enough, we also welcomed our resident NFL team, the Jacksonville Jaguars, witnessed World Championship heavyweight boxing, rugby league and international rugby union.

In 2025 alone, we hosted 51 major events. What stands out is not just the scale, but the breadth of audiences we’re reaching. Events such as the Sidemen Charity Match introduced entirely new, younger and more digitally native fans to Wembley.

As the national stadium, our responsibility is not only to host the biggest occasions, but to remain culturally relevant, bringing together sport, music and entertainment in a way that reflects modern audiences.

We are seeing measurable shifts in our audience profile with more families, females and younger fans now attending.

That is critical to the long-term relevance of a national stadium.

At the recent Pollstar Awards in Los Angeles, Wembley Stadium was named Best International Stadium for the second year running. This was the industry recognising the work we have done and something of which we are incredibly proud.

How do you define Wembley’s “portfolio strategy” across domestic finals, internationals, concerts/residencies, and one-off events?

LYNCH: We don’t approach our calendar through a rigid programming model. Instead, we operate with a clear principle: to deliver the highest-quality sports and entertainment events to the broadest possible audience.

In practice, that means balancing cornerstone events, such as domestic football

finals, with global touring acts, emerging formats, and one-off spectacles. Our long-standing relationships with organisations like The FA, EFL, UEFA and leading promoters ensure Wembley remains the natural home for the world’s biggest and best events.

At the same time, we are deliberate about evolving the mix. Events already in our annual calendar such as AEW Wrestling and the Sidemen Charity Match demonstrate our ability to adapt to new formats and audiences. In 2026 we are expanding again welcoming American College Football to the stadium for the first time. That balance between heritage and innovation is central to our strategy.

Wembley hosted 51 total events and welcomed 3.7 million guests in 2025, including the busiest concert season in



England’s national stadium and place of longing for many clubs as the host venue for most cup finals and promotions play-offs.

Picture: Wembley Stadium

the stadium's history. What does that scale of activity tell you about demand for the venue today, and how does it shape operational planning?

LYNCH: We expect the demand for stadium level events to continue and, where possible, grow even further. We are already programming into 2029, which even in the recent past would have been unheard of.

Goldman Sachs has forecast that live entertainment revenues will double in the next 10 years. We need to ensure that we are operating in as dynamic a way as possible so we can maximise our opportunities and those of promoters and event owners.

Our operational delivery framework has been adapted and honed over the recent past to support our growth. This allows us to operate in an even more efficient and structured way.

We have a two-team delivery structure which allows us to provide the best service to our event owners, whilst ensuring we aren't running the risk of burning out our teams.

Harry Styles is set to make history this summer with a record-breaking 12-night run at Wembley Stadium. Operationally, what changes when an artist is in the building for these many nights versus a single date? Are these "residencies" becoming the new norm for large stadiums?

LYNCH: I wouldn't say residencies are the norm, but it is certainly something we are starting to see more of.

Operationally, the benefits are clear – both to us and promoters. From our perspective, residencies provide greater certainty within the calendar and reductions in load in and load out days, which again gives us more operating time. For artists and promoters, the benefits are reduced transport costs, improved efficiency, and a lower environmental impact. The logistics of moving stadium-scale productions are enormous, so consolidating dates makes strong operational sense.

We are seeing residencies become a core part of stadium touring economics, particularly for the biggest global acts. However, they are one component of a broader programming approach. We remain equally focused on maintaining flexibility to accommodate a wide range of event formats whether that is one, two or twelve nights.



Concerts and live entertainment will remain a core component of Wembley's portfolio.

Known for outstanding pitch quality, does this focus on multiple concert nights in a row help with maintenance instead of constant changes between layouts? How do you balance the demands of large-scale touring productions with the operational constraints of a national stadium, including pitch protection, recovery time, and the broader football calendar?

LYNCH: It ultimately comes down to expertise, planning, and investment in innovation.

Our grounds team, led by Karl Standley, spent more than three years developing and refining the 'lay and play' system to ensure it could meet Wembley's exacting standards. The pitch itself is highly specialised, requiring precise management of light, water, and nutrients over a 14-week growth cycle.

Historically, we would have grown a new pitch from seed in the stadium which takes up to five weeks. Today, we can achieve match-ready conditions in approximately five days, without compromising quality.

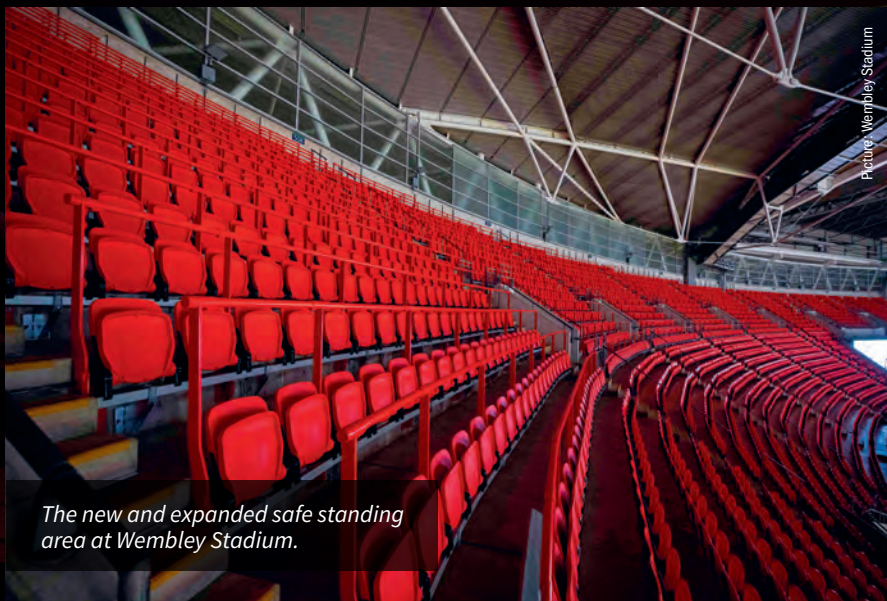
This has removed one of the most significant constraints on stadium multi-use and allows us to operate at a much higher level of efficiency.

In a London market that includes venues like Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, London Stadium, and large arenas such as The O₂, what do you see as Wembley's distinctive USP as a concert and major event destination?

LYNCH: Wembley's scale and heritage will always set it apart, but we're very conscious that the competitive landscape in London is constantly evolving. We continue to invest in both infrastructure and guest experiences, whether through technology upgrades, or ongoing maintenance. As we approach the stadium's 20th anniversary (the new stadium opened in 2007), refreshing and modernising key assets is a major focus.

In addition, we have worked incredibly hard over the past five years, growing the relationships we have with promoters and event owners. They know we operate in a solution-focused way, and they trust our amazing team to deliver. We are laser focused on ensuring each event at the stadium is the absolute best it can be, and I believe this keeps Wembley at the forefront.

Coldplay's 10-show run was used for various sustainability pilots. What did you learn about scaling sustainability without slowing service? →



The new and expanded safe standing area at Wembley Stadium.

LYNCH: Sustainability is a strategic imperative for Wembley Stadium, but we have to balance solutions that are both environmentally effective and operationally viable on a grand scale. There is no one-size-fits-all solution across such a diverse event portfolio. We are always looking to do better and trial solutions that will aid our long-term goals in regard to sustainability.

For Coldplay, we partnered with Delaware North to implement an aluminum reusable cup system across ten shows. The pilot was operationally challenging but ultimately successful. We also introduced Draft Pro technology, which converts canned drinks into open contain-

ers, removing the need for plastic cups entirely. The Draft Pro machines cans were installed at concession points throughout the stadium contributing to a huge saving on single use plastic

These initiatives, which helped replace approximately 400,000 single-use plastic cups, have given us valuable insight into how we can scale sustainability without compromising service.

What infrastructure investments have you made recently?

LYNCH: We've recently completed a significant programme of winter works, worth around 15 million British Pound

(approx. 17.4m EUR / 20.4m USD), ahead of the 2026 season.

This includes installing 10,000 licensed standing seats on Level 5, upgrading our public address and voice alarm system (a critical life-safety infrastructure), enhancing hospitality entrances, and replacing major cooling systems, lifts and escalators. We also redeveloped our learning zone (a space set aside for community use), strengthening our community and education offer in partnership with Brent Council.

Standing still isn't an option. Continuous investment is essential to meet evolving expectations from both fans and event partners.

The expansion of licensed standing in the upper tier followed a successful Level 1 trial and created one of the largest licensed standing areas in British football. What were the main strategic and safety drivers behind this move? What operational changes did you make?

LYNCH: It was driven by a clear objective: to give football fans greater choice while enhancing the matchday atmosphere in a safe, regulated environment.

The move also built on a successful trial we launched in 2023 which demonstrated the benefits of licensed standing in practice. Following that trial, approval was granted by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority in early 2025, enabling the installation of the additional rail seating ahead of the 2026 Carabao Cup Final.

To support this change, we have carried out extensive training with our stewarding and medical teams given the change in environment and adaptation to the operation. We updated all our ticketing information to fans, making them aware that persistent standing is allowed in this part of the ground. We also improved our CCTV systems within the stadium bowl to ensure we can monitor and manage the area effectively.

Licensed standing for football is now an important part of modern stadium design, balancing atmosphere with regulated safety frameworks. We worked closely with regulators and local authorities to ensure full compliance across design, installation, and operation.

To what extent does the presence of rail seating and licensed standing



Wembley's "resident NFL team", the Jacksonville Jaguars, will play their 12th regular-season game at the stadium in 2026.

influence how you plan and deliver other event types, such as concerts or NFL, where load profiles and in bowl behaviour differ from a typical football (soccer) match?

LYNCH: Concerts are not mandated to be all-seated through regulatory policies or guidance. The government's all-seater policy is for designated football matches only, except in areas of the ground where licensed standing provisions have been implemented and licensed.

So, we do have to make some minor logistical arrangements when we convert the stadium into a non-football event such as a concert or NFL. Guests buying tickets in licensed standing areas are informed of their location. There is no specific requirement around persistent standing (as there is in football) so we ensure the safety of all fans through robust event-specific control measures, risk assessments, stewarding, CCTV monitoring, briefings, crowd safety management, and risk mitigation strategies.

The key to a multi-purpose stadium like Wembley is flexibility – ensuring the team are well trained to support different crowd behaviours without compromising safety.

What are the most material additional requirements that EURO 2028 brings compared with a one off final? How different are domestic cup finals or major concerts compared to a EURO final?

LYNCH: The most material shift is time and occupancy. Domestic events typically require only a few days of access, a EURO tournament demands weeks of exclusive use and years of preparatory activity. Commercial requirements are also extensive, with the need for a completely 'clean' stadium free of any existing branding. This means every logo, every sign needs to be changed, covered or re-branded to align with tournament partners.

There is also a major reconfiguration of stadium spaces and overlay. Areas are repurposed at scale: hospitality lounges can become broadcast studios, press and mixed zone areas are greatly enhanced, and seating is converted into media platforms, while additional space is required for logistics, volunteers, and a wide range of client groups. This drives a much larger and more complex overlay than seen in domestic events.



"Sustainability is a strategic imperative for Wembley Stadium"

Picture: The FA

Crucially, the operation extends far beyond the stadium itself. Large external areas (such as car parks) are transformed into broadcast compounds, while off-site facilities are utilised for accreditation centres, offices, and ceremony spaces.

We also operate with a wider OSP (outer security perimeter) to further restrict unauthorised access to the stadium footprint. The OSP operates as an initial screening point for accredited individuals and ticket holders and ensures a clean, ticket only perimeter around the stadium. Road closures and security infrastructure are also in place much earlier than annual domestic fixtures. Co-ordination within a larger city-wide plan is also key. Fan zones, meeting points, and managed routes across London require a great deal of organisation with stakeholders such as City of London, TfL and The Metropolitan Police.

Wembley will host eight fixtures at EURO 2028 including the semi-finals and final in what will be the largest football event ever hosted across the UK & Ireland

Since 2024, an annual cap of 54 major events has applied. How does that framework influence your long-term calendar strategy and your decisions around event mix and asset stewardship?

LYNCH: The 54-event cap represents an evolution from our previous 46-event limit and was introduced to support the long-term growth of the stadium. The

increase enables us to maximise the opportunity in the live event landscape. Wembley already delivers all major end of season or end of competition matches, alongside England fixtures, so we are pretty clear on the number of sporting events we have each season. The increase gives us the flexibility to pencil in a greater number of non-sporting events without fear of going beyond the annual cap.

Also, promoters of large tours and events are generally working two or three years ahead and as already mentioned, we are already planning through to 2029. Importantly, the increase was delivered through close collaboration with the live event industry and with local stakeholders, including the community, Brent Council and businesses around Wembley.

Do you plan on applying for another expansion? Does the current event cap limit your venue significantly?

LYNCH: At present, the cap isn't a constraint. We are operating comfortably within it. However, we are always planning for the future. As we approach the 20th anniversary of the new stadium, we are developing a long-term vision through to 2040 to ensure Wembley continues to evolve as a world-class venue.

Any changes to our event cap in the future would be undertaken in close partnership with our key stakeholders, Brent Council and local community. ♦



TICKETING FOR LA28: DRAW, DROPS, RESALE PROGRAM

In about two years' time, the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games will take place in Los Angeles. stadiaworld takes a look at the ticket sales and drops, the multi-platform resale program and other aspects relating to ticketing.

Whilst the focus in the USA during the summer of 2026 was on the FIFA World Cup, another major sporting event is already on the horizon: the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. Following the venue plans for the Summer Games in 2025 and the announcement of the venues for the opening and closing ceremony (Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and SoFi Stadium), ticket sales began in 2026.

The ticketing system works as follows: Those interested can register online and are then automatically entered into a random draw. In this draw, fixed time slots are allocated to allow access to the ticketing platform and the purchase of tickets for sessions that are available at that time.

However, registration does not guarantee a time slot: not all participants will be selected, but they will automatically be entered into the future draws without needing to re-register.

The first registration phase ran from 14 January to 18 March 2026. Selected fans then received an email notification between 31 March and 7 April, informing them of their time slot for the first general public ticket drop from 9 to 19 April.

Right of First Refusal for Locals

Ahead of the first global sales phase, people from the Greater Los Angeles area and the Oklahoma City region – where the canoe slalom and softball competitions will take place – were given priority access. Reg-

istration was also required for the so-called LA & OKC Locals Presale, with the exclusive ticket sales window open from 2 to 6 April.

Ticketing is being handled by a joint venture between EVENTIM and AXS; tickets are available from 28 US dollars (approx. 24 EUR / 21 GBP). Each purchaser's maximum Olympic ticket allowance is cumulative across all LA28 Olympics tickets presales and drops. Fans may purchase up to 12 total Olympic event tickets and up to 12 additional Football (Soccer) Tournament tickets, with a 4-ticket-per-Ceremony limit counting toward the general 12-ticket maximum.

During the first sales phase, Drop 1, over 4 million tickets were purchased by fans from 85 countries and all states in the USA. Nearly 75 % of the tickets sold were claimed by LA and OKC-area residents.

95% of all tickets for residents of the host regions were sold for under 100 US dollars (approx. 87 EUR / 76 GBP), 500,000 tickets were purchased during LA & OKC Locals Presale at a price of 28 US dollars. The organisers said that LA28 has thus fulfilled its promise to make the Summer Games accessible to local people.

The total number of registrations rose from February (5 million) to the end of July: “Twelve million people registered for a chance to buy tickets, a historic show of excitement, and it’s only the beginning”, said Reynold Hoover, CEO of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Registration for the second ticket sales phase was open until 22 July 2026; Drop 2 will take place from 10 to 20 August under the same conditions as the first. There will once again be a draw – and a right of first refusal: this time, Visa cardholders have the chance to purchase tickets in advance from 29 to 31 July.

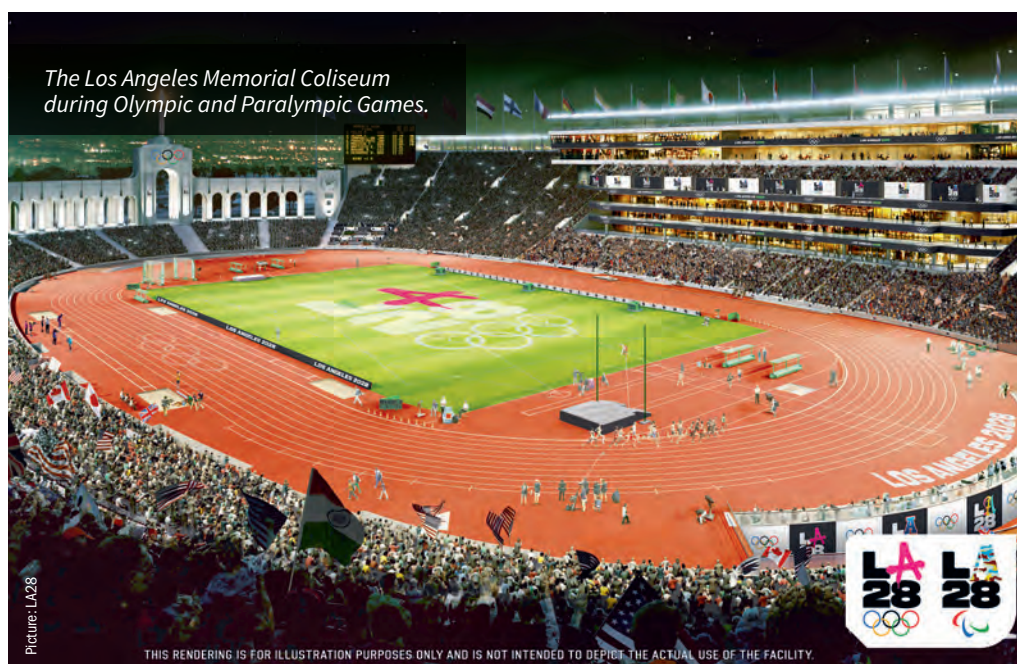
Price Differences in Hospitality Offers

In addition to standard ticket sales, hospitality experiences and packages for LA28 have also been available since April 2026. There is a wide variety of offers available; for example, packages including admission tickets and access to private suites and lounges can also be extended to include hotel stays. The packages are available through the official hospitality and travel provider, On Location. The online shops for hospitality and standard tickets are separate.

There is no limit of 12 tickets per person for hospitality packages. In mid-July 2026, the cheapest packages – for example, for some archery or taekwondo events – were available from 350 US dollars (approx. 305 EUR / 265 GBP). Tickets for the opening ceremony at SoFi Stadium cost at least 15,000 US Dollars (approx. 13,180 EUR / 11,265 GBP) – no other event was more expensive in mid-July 2026.

Ticket Resale Program From 2027

Once the ticket sales phases have concluded, fans will also have the opportunity to obtain a ticket through other channels or to resell the one they have purchased. In 2027, a verified multi-platform ticket resale program will open. Alongside EVENTIM and AXS, Ticketmaster and Sports



Illustrated Tickets are also among the official platforms through which the official secondary ticket marketplace operates. The organising committee emphasises that any tickets offered for resale prior to 2027 are not verified.

“With millions around the globe registered for the LA28 Ticket Draw and as excitement for LA28 continues to grow, we want fans to have the information they need to shop with confidence as

we approach the first ticket drop,” said LA28 CEO Hoover when the secondary market was announced. He added that the wide variety of different platforms was crucial to offering fans more ways to access verified tickets.

As well as the resale market, fans and anyone else interested will have another option for buying tickets next year: Tickets for the Summer Paralympics won’t go on sale before 2027. ♦

NEW COMPETITION FORMAT

“ALL ACTION, NO FILLER”

Interview with World Athletics CEO Jon Ridgeon about the Ultimate Championship in Budapest from 11 – 13 September 2026.



Picture: World Athletics

Jon Ridgeon

You have stated that with the premiere of the Ultimate Championship in Budapest, you aim to build on one of the most successful World Championships ever. However, after three years, will many areas of the stadium infrastructure need to be rebuilt for this top-tier event?

RIDGEON: When the Gyula Zsivotsky National Athletics Centre was purpose-built for the World Championships in 2023, it was intended to be a long-serving asset for the city of Budapest. We are seeing that return value now for this first edition of the Ultimate Championship. The stadium has been phenomenally well-maintained, and in the intervening years, the upper concourse area was utilised for public access as an exercise facility.

New temporary seating is being built in response to the high demand for tickets to this brand-new global championship. As is standard for major events, there will also be temporary infrastructure for media and broadcasters. We are working closely with our counterparts at the local

organising committee – representatives of the NRU – to plan and deliver a championship that will keep fans at the edge of their seats, whether they are in stadium or watching from home.

This new athletics format fits well with Budapest as a tourism destination. Is there an official cooperation with the city in this regard?

RIDGEON: Of course! We are working closely with our counterparts at the local organising committee – representatives of the NRU. Budapest is hosting multiple global sporting events this year, from the Formula 1 race to the Champions League Final to the Ultimate Championship. We know the Ultimate Championship will bring in people from across the world, and we are excited to bring attention to the city as a general tourist destination as well as one for sporting fans.

Will there be side events and an extended presence of the event with branding across the city – both to engage the local population and to develop expanded hospitality and sponsorship activities?

RIDGEON: There is currently branding across the city and that will continue to be the case in the coming months through the event. Whether through physical or digital billboards, large-scale signage, and fun branded activations, the out of home presence is strong in Budapest. The Ultimate Championship will also have reach beyond the stadium with some auxiliary events that will be announced closer to the start of the championship.

How are you approaching the hospitality packages for this premiere edition? How many hospitality categories will there be?

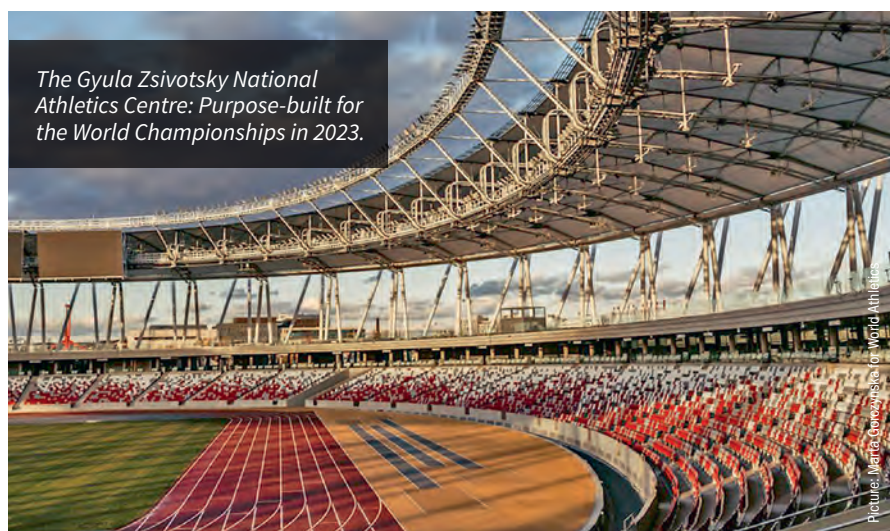
RIDGEON: For this inaugural edition, we are focused on the entirety of the in-stadium experience for all of our spectators. We want every single person in the stadium to feel like a VIP, with a competition schedule and an event structure designed to maximise the impact of every moment of the action on the field of play.

How does the operational effort compare to your other top-tier events?

RIDGEON: This event is a new global championship and is being treated as such. Athletes have excellent memories of the World Championships in 2023, and we intend to build on that experience with the Ultimate Championship. The stadium was created for athletics, and through existing spaces as well as some temporary structures, this will be optimised and leveraged.

You have called the Ultimate Championship “an accelerator for innovation in athletics”. What specific technologies and production innovations are being planned to enhance the experience both in the stadium and for TV audiences?

RIDGEON: We will be sharing more on these innovations in the coming months, so please keep a look out for announcements from us. We are prioritising inno-



The Gyula Zsivotsky National Athletics Centre: Purpose-built for the World Championships in 2023.

Picture: Maria Gwizdzka for World Athletics



vation across our operations, from our broadcast product to our event scripting to our athlete experience to our event presentation. Innovation will come not through just technologies. This will be a made-for-television product in a way that no other athletics event has been before.

Which stadiums – or perhaps more accurately, which cities with their stadiums – can hope to host future editions of the Ultimate Championship?

RIDGEON: In addition to having a shared ambition, political support, and will to deliver a world-class event, any city that hopes to host the Ultimate will need to have an excellent balance of venue facilities and infrastructure, plus city amenities and an excited local organising committee with a strong and knowledgeable athletics community to pack the stadium.

What are the minimum technical and infrastructure requirements a venue must meet to host the Ultimate Championship? Does the compact three-evening format change the specifications compared to a traditional World Athletics Championships?

RIDGEON: This championship is centred on the best of the best. There are

fewer days of competition, fewer sessions, fewer athletes, and as a result, fewer associated officials. But this is a true global championship, and we are treating it as such from an operational and organisational perspective. We are going to deliver a premium athletics product.

“A PREMIUM ATHLETICS PRODUCT”

Sustainability has become a key criterion for major sporting events. What environmental and sustainability measures are being implemented for the Ultimate Championship in Budapest?

RIDGEON: World Athletics is continually striving to reduce the environmental impacts of our events and increase their social and local economic benefits. This will be achieved at the Ultimate Championship through conscientious use of infrastructure (prioritising planning around existing structures and investing in temporary structures only when

necessary), thoughtful partnerships, responsible sourcing, additional value for community members, and more.

What do you expect from this event as a live format – for audiences and host cities, but also for the global television reach of athletics?

RIDGEON: The Ultimate Championship will be all action, no filler. We have reimagined the structure to eliminate downtime, with a condensed schedule of only semi-finals and finals, one discipline at a time. It will be compact and high-impact, with 28 finals featured in three-hour sessions across three nights of competition.

There will be new field event formats, featuring advancement adjustments in the horizontal jumps and throws, plus dynamic height progression in the vertical jumps, all designed to optimise the telling of the full story of each event.

It will be the best of the best, all at their absolute peak – Olympic Champions, World Champions, and Diamond League Champions, plus the highest ranked athletes of the year.

With the historic prize pot of 10 million US dollars, and with no country quotas, it's a chance to truly settle the debate: who is the Ultimate Champion? ♦

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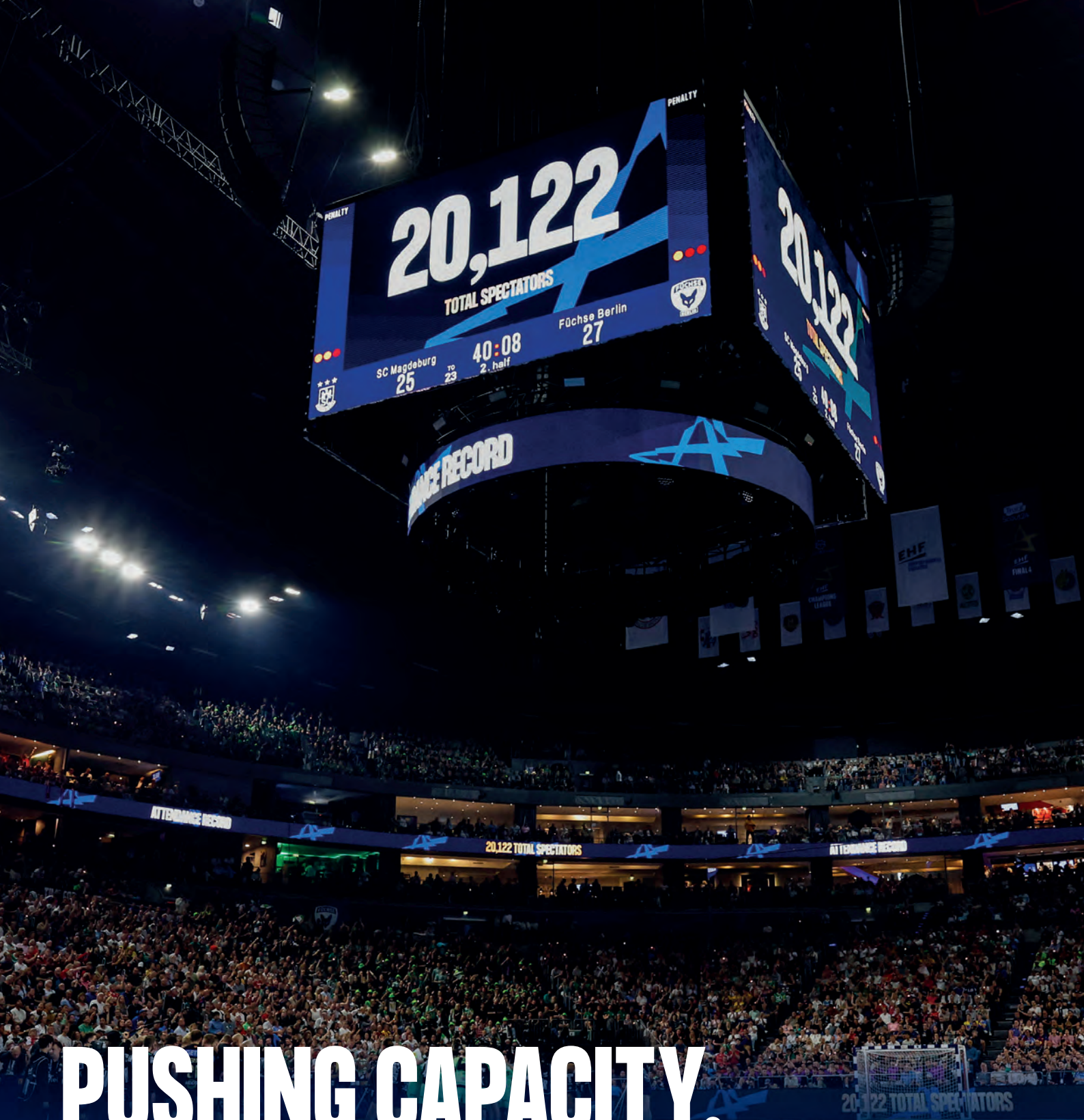
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