

# venues

## TODAY

## Destined to Be Great

The Milwaukee Bucks' new arena entertainment district and Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, are redefining the arena industry



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**WELLS FARGO CENTER TURNS 20**

2016





Flyered up crowd at Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, prior to the start of the Philadelphia Flyers home game. [Photo by Getty Images].

# 20 YEARS OF OUTSTANDING PARTNERSHIPS

Ed Snider's risky vision for Philly's Wells Fargo Center was to keep it relevant and busy, and it is

by R.V. BAUGUS

To understand how the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia even got to this year's milestone 20th anniversary, you have to go back to the vision of Comcast Spectacor Chairman Ed Snider for the construction of the venue's predecessor Spectrum and the posthumous legacy he left after passing away on April 11 of this year. ➤

# PHILADELPHIA FLYERS 50TH ANNIVERSARY WELLS FARGO CENTER 20TH ANNIVERSARY

“Ed had the wherewithal to go out and bring the Philadelphia Flyers to the marketplace in 1967,” said John Page, president of the Wells Fargo Center.

Part of that vision included building an arena, which the Spectrum became as the team began playing in the National Hockey League that year. Less than 20 years later, Snider understood the need for a new facility to not only allow the Flyers and fellow tenant Philadelphia 76ers of the National Basketball Association to remain competitive, but perhaps most of all to be fan-friendly, another matter of utmost importance to Snider. With that came the opening of the Wells Fargo Center in 1996.

Now, another 20 years later, the arena celebrates two decades as perhaps the country’s foremost arena venue in hosting a litany of events that, in addition to its full-time NBA, NHL and Arena Football League Philadelphia Soul tenants include, most recently, the Democratic National Convention, the 2000 Republican National Convention, an ongoing annual number of Villanova University basketball games, major concerts, an NCAA Men’s Frozen Four hockey championship, NCAA Final Four, two Olympic Team Trials, WWE Wrestlemania XV, three games at the Aug. 31, 1996 World Cup of Hockey to kick off the venue and even television programs Wheel of Fortune, American Idol and Harvest America. It is a venue that puts the “multi” in multipurpose.

“All the types of events we have had in the last 20 years is a credit to the marketplace,” Page said. “It’s a credit to the design of the building and its flexibility. It’s also a credit to our parent company Comcast knowing that we have the capacity and the marketplace to do all of the necessary marketing, advertising and promotion. There’s a lot behind this, a lot of substance and a lot of creativity which allows us to do all these great things. Once people know that when they come to Philadelphia they are going to get taken care of then it becomes a real win-win and a positive for everybody.”

“We consider the Flyers, who we (Comcast Spectacor) own, as our partner,”

added Mike Sulkes, assistant general manager of the Wells Fargo Center. “We have the 76ers, and Villanova won the NCAA basketball championship last year and obviously thrilled to be partners and playing about seven or eight games a year here. We have the Philadelphia Soul who are great partners, play their games in the summer and are a great family product

“Once people know that when they come to Philadelphia they are going to get taken care of then it becomes a real win-win and a positive for everybody.”

— JOHN PAGE

that connects well with the community. These four tenants are really great partners and provide a great, diverse line of sporting events throughout the year.”

Peter Luukko served as president and chief operating officer of Comcast Spectacor for more than 25 years before leaving in 2013 and later becoming the executive chairman of the Florida Panthers of the NHL as well as part of the Oak View Group, a Los Angeles-based business venture that develops a national platform for bringing sponsorships and events to stadiums and arenas not presently under contract with a management firm. He remembers the launch of the Wells Fargo Center (its fourth name after morphing from CoreStates Center to First Union Center to Wachovia

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“We have five levels of seating with each having individual concourses which really helped alleviate a lot of concourse congestion that was over at the Spectrum. That impacted every fan no matter what seat you were in. Each individual concourse spreads everyone out and makes for a better experience at the concession lines.” — MIKE SULKES



Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, as seen at night. [Photo by Len Redkoles/Comcast Spectacor].

## WELLS FARGO CENTER BY THE NUMBERS

- Aug. 21, 1996** – Ribbon-cutting for the Wells Fargo Center
- 19,500** – Attendance at the first event, the World Cup of Hockey on Aug. 31, 1996
- 40,000** – People attending the 2000 Republican National Convention each day either as a media member, delegate, worker or VIP
- 235,000** – Six-day attendance figure of the 2001 X-Games
- July 27, 2010** – Name changed to Wells Fargo Center
- 4** – Number of names for the venue in the last 20 years
- 30** – Years on the naming rights deal (nine years remain)
- \$210 million** – Cost to build the Wells Fargo Center
- 126** – Luxury suites on three separate levels
- 14** – Club Box sections
- 230** – Average number of events each year
- \$75-\$80 million** – Money to be spent the next two summers for building renovations
- 130** – Approximate number of full-time employees
- 500** – Approximate number of part-time employees
- \$50,000** – Amount lost on a rib festival the first year of operation

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Center) and the World Cup of Hockey.

“We basically had the whole world broadcasting from the arena,” Luukko said. “In a way, it was like a stadium opening with the first event the Super Bowl. That was fantastic. Another highlight was that John LeClair scored for Team USA the first goal in the building and he was one of our players. To have a Flyer score the first goal playing for Team USA was a pretty good script.”

That script has been rewritten numerous times in an arena that cost \$210 million to build and seats 21,000. Most of all, the Wells Fargo Center was quite simply a building that needed to spring out of the dirt when it did in 1996.

“The elements that Ed really wanted to bring and retain at the center were the old architectural design and unique features (of the Spectrum),” Page said. “We needed a much bigger building and premium seats, although the club box model that we created here really was a vision from the Spectrum when we had the super box model there. Having small, defined boxes so that people had a real intimate feel and their own restrooms that we could carry through albeit on a much larger scale. But really the charge was to keep it as intimate as possible with the right fit for the marketplace and allow the revenue to drift to the teams so that they could be competitive.

“Everything that Ed thought would happen did happen. He didn’t get a lot of support from a public financial perspective. It was really a personal risk deal. He leveraged some resources and risked nearly everything on this building project and proved to be very successful. Here we are now 20 years later and talking about the next 20 years,” Page said.

## TODAY AND TOMORROW

Who could have envisioned in 1997 the technology that has brought venues like Wells Fargo Center to where they are today and a world where teams and venues can know almost anything about their guests from what is swiped on a card at the concession stand, the team shop or even in the parking lot? Part of

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# CONGRATULATIONS ON **20 ELECTRIFYING YEARS** IN PHILADELPHIA!



FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT



## FROM GOOD TO GREAT

Customer service is a big deal at the Wells Fargo Center and has been since the building opened on Aug. 31, 1996. How big of a deal? Enough that for years venue owner Comcast Spectacor employed a customer service program called "How You Doin'?" Just over a year ago the program changed its name to "From Good To Great."

But make no mistake, all employees at the Wells Fargo Center want to know how their guests are doing.

"We re-evaluated and changed the name a little bit last year," said John Page, president of the Wells Fargo Center. "We've raised the expectation of all of our people who come in contact with our customers and fans. Without great customer service you can't be successful in this business. It's something that really starts with me to make sure we are walking the building on a constant basis, talking to people and interacting with our fans so they feel good about it. So we really got to walk the walk and talk the talk so that fans see that we're all engaged. For us it's really key."

Page traces the roots of the program back to 1998 at a time when the two-year-old venue was looking to differentiate itself from two new stadiums being built in the city for the National Football League Philadelphia Eagles and Major League Baseball's Philadelphia Phillies. What started then became a company-wide initiative at every one of the company's venues.

"We created a simple program called 'How You Doin'?',"" he said. "For us it was about having a way to interact with the fans as they entered the venue. That moment could come in the parking lot or their first contact from an usher or ticket-taker to really say, 'How you doin'?' today?"

"It's kind of a local catchphrase in Philadelphia but, for me, it's about keeping it simple. We want to treat everybody we come in contact with the way that we want to be treated. It's with respect, with dignity and making sure if there is an issue we can get to it and address it quickly. It's about the live entertainment experience that is hard to replicate. You can sit in front of the television and have a lot of choices these days, but for us if we can retain people whether they are season ticket holders or people who like to come to a number of different events on an annual basis, it makes our job that much easier."

As with everything on the team and venue side in Philadelphia, it all began with Ed Snider, who was the driving force behind the Wells Fargo Center and the National Hockey League Philadelphia Flyers when they became a franchise in 1967.

"Ed wanted fans to experience great customer service and experience live events that they can't get anywhere else," said Mike Sulkes, assistant general manager of the facility. "Ed loved to hire great people to do their jobs. We have a great team here at the Wells Fargo Center from John all the way down. They all know their roles. We let them do their thing and let them be creative. We trust in them that they're going to do the right thing. We're all kind of carrying on Mr. Snider's vision that is on display every single day. We all have the same goal and we're working hard every day to do that."

Customer service would seem to be a given for any venue, but at a time when people have dozens of choices on how and where to spend their hard-earned dollars, placing the customer first is even more paramount. Much is also due to rising expectations of fans. No longer is it enough to merely offer just a seat to a paying patron.

"We are fortunate to be part of the Comcast family," Page said. "We had a significant Wi-Fi upgrade 18 months ago. Coming into the [Democratic] convention there was enough of an infrastructure to make sure with the media and attention that was going to occur here that we had the technology available."

"From a fan perspective comparison, there are not many venues that have the technology that we have available. I look at it as you're really competing with the couch more than anything because of what you can get from your TV. Now, if you're going to a venue you've got your phone and your chair at the arena you're still connected and you just need your phone to be able to perform like it does in any other given situation. We've got 20,000 people all vying for access to the Internet. That's really when the rubber hits the road. We feel good about our position and Comcast supports all our initiatives to make sure our fans have great experiences. There is interplay on the scoreboard and teams are always doing something from a social media perspective. That's the barometer these days. You have to have everything. You have to have all the bells and whistles to keep up with the Joneses. That's what we're here to do."

It is safe to say that while fans today at the Wells Fargo Center might not be specifically asked "How You Doin'?", they would consider their experience at the venue having gone "From Good To Great."

## 20 YEARS... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

successfully turning 20 in the fast-turnover world of modern arenas does involve visionaries as well as those who are willing to take some risks, something that Page is familiar with.

"When you look at what we do in terms of tenants outside of the traditional sports tenants, we have great partners like Live Nation and Feld Entertainment who are also part of our success," Page said. "The concert and touring sides are just as important as the Flyers and Sixers to us. It's really about calculated risks. The one thing I learned when I moved to Philadelphia was what the market means and really getting a good feel for the marketplace. It also means using all your resources."

"It might mean buying a show or jumping off the rails a bit to do something a little different. How risk averse are you? I think you need to understand what the marketplace wants and what it will bear, what ticket price you set so that you can do things you may not do traditionally. But if you can make it work and have reoccurring revenue off of some sort of risk that you took, then you're going to be better for it at the end of the day."

Page remembers that when he was new to the market the risks were even more plentiful. "It was about trying to do as many different things as we could when this building opened 20 years ago and we had two arenas (the Spectrum was demolished by May 2011)," he said. "So how could you fill two arenas and go from 52 Friday/Saturday/Sundays and get to 104? How do you make it all work? That was beating the bushes to drive as many different events as you could. We threw a lot on the wall and some made sense and some didn't."

"But you have got to try things and you can't be afraid to do so. If not, you're really not going to be successful. You can create great partnerships out of taking risks. Sometimes there's no bad shows, there are only bad deals and that's what it's all about."

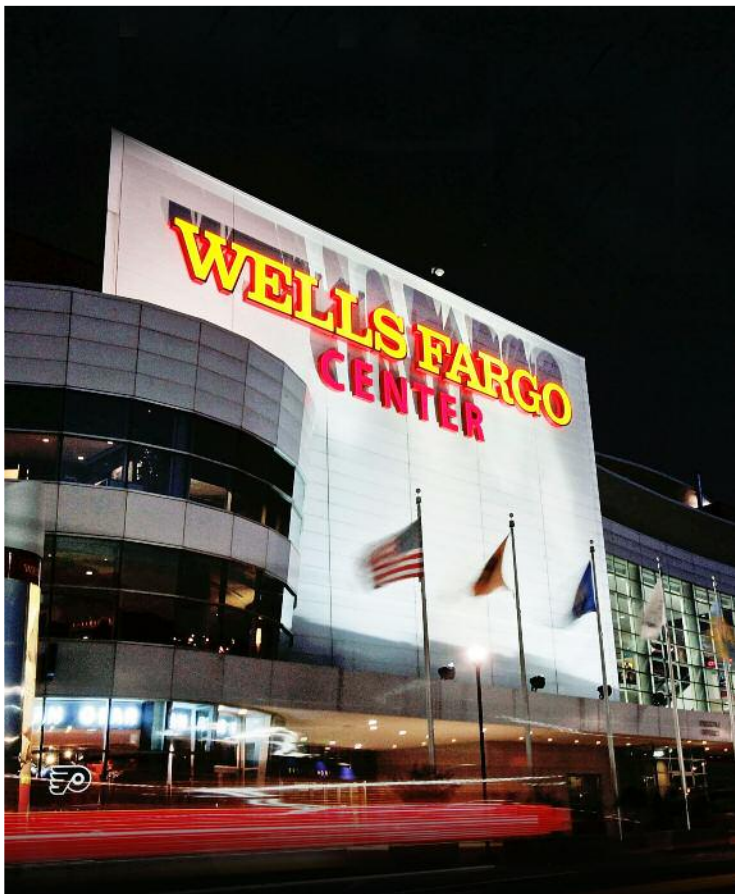
The results have also meant a vast array of entertainment experiences for guests.

"Our partnerships with Feld Entertainment and the Harlem Globetrotters

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# CELEBRATING IN PHILADELPHIA!



WELLS FARGO CENTER  
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THE FLYERS TURN 50!



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# FLYERS FLOURISH ON GRIT AND LOYALTY

Philadelphia's hockey team celebrates 50 years of representing a city's heart and soul

by R.V. BAUGUS



Left: The late Comcast Spectacor Chairman Ed Snider at center ice welcoming Joel Otto of Team USA for the opening face off at Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, World Cup of Hockey. (Photo by Comcast Spectacor); right: Two Philadelphia Flyers, Eric Lindros (left) and John LeClair clashed in the World Cup of Hockey, featuring Team USA vs Team Canada in the inaugural event at the Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, on Aug. 31, 1996. (Photo by Comcast Spectacor.)

When the Philadelphia Flyers flew into town in 1967 as a new National Hockey League expansion franchise, there were no guarantees that the team would become a success, much less exist after a few years.

"I don't know that you could envision what it meant at that time," said Paul Holmgren, the team's president. "I'm not sure how many people thought it would last. Joe Watson, one of the very first Flyers who still works for us in our ad sales department, talks all the time about how the Flyers had a parade

a couple of months after they got the franchise and about five players showed up and not many more fans. Not a great start."

As is often taught, though, it is not how you start but how you finish. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the franchise and it is not even remotely close to the finish line as it represents one of the most stable and successful teams in the competitive NHL, both on the ice and off.

"I think the first home game drew about 7,500 people," Holmgren said. "Somewhere along the way it clicked and they developed a niche in the city. I know that our fans are the most loyal fans in North America. But it's our

own little niche and it was created in 1967. It was a franchise full of grit, determination, hard work and loyalty. That's Philadelphia. The Flyers fit that mold right from day one."

Holmgren speaks from personal experience with the franchise. He was drafted by the team in the 1975 NHL Amateur Draft and would go on to serve with the organization in 41 of its 50 years as a player, scout, assistant coach, coach, assistant general manager, general manager and now president. Holmgren also knows that the longevity of the franchise would not be possible without Ed Snider, who died this very year. His vision at the time not only included building the Spectrum to anchor



both the Flyers and the National Basketball Association Philadelphia 76er's but, as chairman of Comcast Spectacor, owning the Flyers and Wells Fargo Center where the team now plays.

"Even though a lot of people were naysayers, you mention a visionary, and that is a perfect example of how this thing happened and here we are 50 years later," Holmgren said. "I have known Ed since 1976. When you first meet him, you get those steely eyes and see the burning passion in those eyes. Everything he has done with the organization, with the city of Philadelphia and anything he has touched, he brought that passion with it."

The Flyers under Snider took on a snowball effect as the team experienced early success such as becoming the first NHL expansion team to win a Stanley Cup in 1974 and then repeat in 1975. With that success more and more fans came on board to celebrate the Broad Street Bullies, as those teams were known. Still, the very beginning was fraught with risk for Snider.

"Ed worked so hard accumulating wealth to put it all on the line again as he did when he bought the Flyers in 1967," said Peter Luukko, who worked with Comcast Spectacor from 1985-2013 and also served as the team's president. "He was pretty amazing and certainly showed the kind of guts he had as well as obviously his entrepreneurship. It's one thing to be a creator and visionary and another thing to work so hard to accumulate wealth, and deservedly so, and then to put it all on the line again. It really is a testament to Ed."

"Ed is arguably the most influential person in the history of Philadelphia sports and all he brought to the city," added Shawn Tilger, the team's chief operating officer. "The brand he created matches the characteristics of Philadelphia. That's what I think made his relationship with the fans, the hockey world and the sports and entertainment world so special. As a person and mentor to all of us, one of the things that made Ed who he was, was not only his loyalty but also his ability to take the most complex issues and simplify them. He

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## FLYERS BY THE NUMBERS

- Aug. 3, 1966** – Team name is announced
- 1967** – NHL hockey comes to Philadelphia
- 7,812** – Attendance at first home game
- 1974** – Team wins its first Stanley Cup
- 1975** – Team repeats as Stanley Cup champion
- 35** – Flyers 1979-80 longest unbeaten streak of games in North American professional sports
- 25-0-10** – Record during the unbeaten streak
- 3-0** – Flyers trail the Boston Bruins in the Eastern Conference playoffs in 2009-10
- 4-3** – Flyers sweep the next four games to advance in the playoffs
- 3** – Flyers become just the third team in NHL history and fourth in professional sports history to accomplish the feat
- 18** – Number of team personnel in the Hockey Hall of Fame

**ARAMARK** IS HONORED TO BE THE FOOD, BEVERAGE, AND RETAIL MERCHANDISE PARTNER OF TWO **PHILADELPHIA INSTITUTIONS—THE PHILADELPHIA FLYERS AND THE WELLS FARGO CENTER.**

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**GOOD LUCK  
THIS SEASON!**



## PHILLY SPORTS FANS BAND TOGETHER

Hockey is a violent sport. Philadelphia sports fans are passionate. Combine the two and it is not easy being a visiting hockey team at the Wells Fargo Center, or for that matter a visitor at any of the local professional sports venues that the Flyers, Eagles, 76ers and Phillies call home. And that is precisely what makes the rabid Philly fandom who they are.

"We do have a rabid fan base. They are loyal to their team. They are anti-affinity to the opposition," said Paul Holmgren, president of the Flyers, in a succinct summation.

It helps to have had an owner like Ed Snider, who in addition to being the founder and owner of the Flyers beginning in 1967 was very much a fan himself and always considered the opinions of those who came to watch his team play.

"Not only was Ed a fan, he was the greatest fan," said Holmgren, who knew the owner since 1976 before Snider's passing this past April. "Everything we did as a team, whether from the business side or the hockey side, ultimately his first question was always, 'How are the fans going to take this?' I mean, whatever you're talking about. You talk about raising ticket prices or making a big trade or signing a top free agent, he would always think about the fans.

"He had passion and it seems like our fans have taken on his personality. We have the most passionate fans in hockey. Mr. Snider really, really cared about our fans. It was pretty unique, in my opinion."

Snider was as invested in the game as the fans and when the Flyers took the ice he became fan Ed Snider instead of owner Ed Snider.

"He was truly into the game, not just as an owner," said Shawn Tilger, chief operating officer for the team. "You only had to see him either before or after the night of a game. There was a culture that was built and still exists for all of us. I remember a time when he called me during a game to ask something or critique something. As soon as the play would start he would hang up. He would end your sentence, not his!"

When Wells Fargo Center opened in 1996 as part of Snider's vision for a new arena to remain competitive, the design was done with the fans in mind.

"This building showed how much Ed cared about his fans," said Peter Luukko, who during his time with Comcast Spectacor from 1985-2013 also served as the team's president. "When we put in the luxury seating and club seating we didn't relocate any of our fans. We had the same number of rows at the old Spectrum so if you were a season ticket holder at center ice you would get almost the exact same location at the Wells Fargo Center and the same with the premium seating and club seating."

### BUT ABOUT THOSE FANS

Regardless of where those fans sit, they are usually happiest when their team is winning. Holmgren grew up in Minnesota and was 20 years old when he was introduced to Philadelphia as a player. The impression, suffice it to say, was indelible.

"There is a saying called Minnesota Nice," he said. "People in Minnesota are generally nice. When I came here I literally had to learn to merge at a yield sign. In Minnesota people at the yield sign wave you in. Here, they don't do that. It's a very aggressive, blue collar, hard-working, love-to-get-dirty type of town. That's the attitude.

"I remember playing here and coaching here. Wherever you stop for coffee in the morning, like at the Wawa [convenience store], well, on Monday morning if you stop and the Eagles lost, literally everybody is in a bad mood. It's sort of the same with the Flyers. They live and die with their sports. We have a niche of Flyers fans, not to say that they're not Eagles fans or Phillies fans, because they are, but they are solidly behind the Flyers.

"I don't know where we're ranked in the city among the sports teams, but we're comfortably in a good spot. We all root for the Eagles, we all root for the 76ers, we all want the Phillies to win. That's just kind of the way we are. We're sort of like Philadelphia. Not all of us were born here, but we're Philadelphia now and we root for the home teams. We're Pennsylvanians, and that's the way the city is."

Tilger remembers a conversation with a die-hard fan that had the potential to turn sour but instead showed the resilience of Philly fans.

"This sums it up in terms of the Philadelphia fans," he said. "The one thing I think that many cities with professional sports have is apathy. It's never an issue here. I've walked in to different places and run into people and once they figure out where your place of work is they talk to you about it. This guy talked to me about the game and what he thought but at the end of the conversation said, 'See you at the game tonight.' It's that kind of passion. You can't inject that. It's built over time."


### 20 YEARS... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

are essential in providing a truly diverse programming schedule with great family friendly entertainment," Sulkes said. "Disney on Ice, which takes over the arena during the winter holiday break, is a highlight on our calendar."

The venue made an early impression when the first expansion came early on in 1997 as the Comcast SportsNet studios opened inside the arena. Shortly after the 2000 Republican National Convention, a second expansion added 16,200 square feet with most allocated as office space to accommodate the growing demands of the company. A regional store was later added along with suite enhancements, wall coverings, furniture, carpets and then, post the recent Democratic National Convention, the renovation of 42 suites on the main suite level.

"We have five levels of seating with each having individual concourses which really helped alleviate a lot of concourse congestion that was over at the Spectrum," Sulkes said. "That was a great new feature from the beginning. It really impacted every fan no matter what seat you were in. Each individual concourse spreads everyone out and makes for a better experience at the concession lines."

It is easy to talk about the venue's history and gaze into the future's crystal ball, but now is the time to just enjoy the 20th year of existence. Page said a year-long media campaign supports everything in history from simple remembrances to commemorative tickets.

"Celebrating 20 years is quite an accomplishment, but when you think about the history and why we're here, a large part of it is because of the Flyers and the celebration of their 50th anniversary. We will be representing the history of not only the arena but the Flyers as well. Whether it is celebrating the circus, the Harlem Globetrotters, the Sixers, everything coming up will all be combined to really create additional awareness which hopefully will drive additional fans to support the teams and the other events that will occur throughout the course of the year." 

Interviewed for this story: **Peter Luukko**, (954) 835-7000; **John Page**, (215) 336-3600; **Mike Sulkes**, (215) 336-3600



## FLYERS FLOURISH... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

was Twitter before there was Twitter.”

That brand, most specifically the team logo, is recognized worldwide and has never changed in 50 years.

## THE PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

Under the ownership of Comcast Spectacor, both the venue and the team have ample opportunities to work in partnership with the owner.

“Just like on the ice, we’re a team off the ice,” said Tilger, who has been with the company since 1997 and moved over to the Flyers after first working on the building side. “I mean that is how we centralize efforts for everything from premium seating to sales to cross promotion of different events and helping each other in every way we can to be creative, and making sure that everything we add not only drives the fan experience and revenue and sponsorship opportunities, but is a new way to engage the fans and make it interesting. That’s obviously something you can’t do if you’re not 100% aligned with your partners on the building side.”

That partnership is now at its busiest as the team prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary when the pre-season begins in mid-October. It will be a time to celebrate past teams, past players, the rabid fan base and most of all the man who made it all possible.

“First and foremost we are going to do our best to honor our founder Ed Snider,” Holmgren said.

“We have some neat things in place coming up on that and a lot of unique ideas in terms of how we’re going to honor past players.”

“We have sat down and really thought about this a lot,” Tilger said. “This process really started more than two years ago. Our goal in this was to celebrate the journey of the team’s history while showcasing the team that’s on the rise now. We will be celebrating a lot of

our history of not only the players and other members of the organization but also the fans and the sport of hockey as a whole in Philadelphia.

“We will be participating in the Stadium Series this year against Pittsburgh, which is also celebrating their 50th anniversary. We’re going to be hosting an alumni game here at the Wells Fargo Center against Pittsburgh. We

“We will be participating in the Stadium Series this year against Pittsburgh, which is also celebrating their 50th anniversary. We’re going to be hosting an alumni game here at the Wells Fargo Center against Pittsburgh. — SHAWN TILGER

will have a litany of major players from throughout our 50 years. It’s going to be a really special day and special event.”

The team will roll out a 50th anniversary jersey for its first home game and it will be worn 12 other times during the season. A banner on the building will commemorate the anniversary as will a logo on the ice and patch on the jerseys.

While all associated with the organization are excited about this year’s milestone, the impact that the Flyers have had on hockey participation overall is a source of even greater pride.

“It is very impressive at the professional level here in the Philadelphia market how much it’s grown,” Tilger said. “Then the fact that USA hockey is bringing prospects to a game here in September. We have hosted the Frozen Four (NCAA), hosted a Winter Classic, the World Cup, several college games and all of them have flourished. I have to believe the Flyers and our fan support had something to do with that.

“Numerous times you’ve seen it noted that the Philadelphia fans are among the most intimidating, not to people but to opposing teams that come in. That makes it a great place for people to attend a Flyers game but also for our players. I can’t tell you how many times Paul and others have played in front of a full building. The market has responded to the Flyers. The history shows itself in terms of that.”

With hockey growing at the grassroots level by leaps and bounds, the future is indeed bright for the Flyers and for the sport. Las Vegas will become the league’s newest franchise following the upcoming season and television ratings continue to grow. It is all a far reach from where this particular team and franchise stood back in 1967, and for the man who took a risk to bring it all to Philadelphia.

“We went to Mr. Snider last season to talk about our 50th season,” Holmgren said. “He passed away about two days after we clinched a playoff spot, which was kind of cool. He knew that his team made the playoffs.”

Interviewed for this story: **Paul Holmgren**, (215) 218-7825; **Peter Luukko**, (954) 835-7000; **Shawn Tilger**, (215) 218-7825