



By Bill Vilona - Contributing Writer for the Pensacola Ice Flyers

Pensacola, Fla. (July 8, 2020) - The Ice Flyers will soon present a whole new fan experience, thanks to enhancements at the Pensacola Bay Center announced Wednesday.

The team becomes the biggest beneficiary of a new high-definition video scoreboard, as part of upgrades the arena is implementing to host the Sun Belt Conference men's and women's basketball tournaments the next five years.

Prismview, the LED division of Samsung, has been chosen as the vendor for the project. The center-hung scoreboard will be installed in September prior to the scheduled start of the Ice Flyers' 2020-21 season. It replaces the antiquated center-hung, matrix scoreboard that was installed in 1996 and no longer has replacement parts available.

The project will also include two additional Samsung large LED video displays to be mounted in opposite corners of the arena, along with two fixed digit scoring and stats boards at each end.

The Escambia County Commission has approved the project.

"This is very exciting news," said Harris, who has committed \$150,000 to the scoreboard purchase and installation. "It is going to completely change the fan experience for our fans and sponsors, as well as for patrons at every other event the Bay Center will host."

“There will be video and graphics and camera footage capabilities everywhere, no matter where you look. And these boards will have capability of showing multiple different videos. When people walk into the Bay Center, it’s going to be a whole different experience than ever before. It will be amazing.”

It will be a joint investment by the county, Ice Flyers owner Greg Harris, the Sun Belt Conference and ASM Global, a Los Angeles-based management company which operates more the 300 arenas and stadiums worldwide. ASM Global was formed in October 2019 through a merger of AEG Facilities and SMG – the company that manages the Bay Center.

“On behalf of the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners, we are proud of this partnership with the Pensacola Ice Flyers, the Sun Belt Basketball Conference and ASM Global to enhance events and create a real sense of place in Pensacola,” said commission chairman Steve Berry, who represents District 5 on the commission. “I am looking forward to hosting fans and visitors when the timing is right to enjoy an enhanced experience at the Pensacola Bay Center.”

The announcement coincides with the Ice Flyers new lease agreement, recently approved by the county, which ensures professional hockey’s future in Pensacola through the 2024-25 season and has extension options through 2027.

“This is the longest contract we have ever had,” said Harris, who became majority owner of the Ice Flyers during the franchise’s fourth season in 2012. “I appreciate all the work (ASM Global) are going to be doing at the Bay Center, along with the help from the Escambia County commissioners, so I wanted to contribute and be part of that.”

“And my desire was to also give back to (Escambia County), the area and the Bay Center that have all been so great to us. I wanted to show my commitment, even in a time like this with the coronavirus pandemic. I am grateful to all the entities who have invested in this project.”



Whenever the Ice Flyers can begin a new season in the Southern Professional Hockey League (SPHL), they will do so in a whole different way of presentation for a game. The new video boards will enable the Ice Flyers to show replays, fan cams, sponsor commercials and so many other fan-engagement options the team has never been able to provide.

Samsung has recently provided new video boards for two NBA arenas, the State Farm Arena in Atlanta and the Chase Center in San Francisco, home of the Golden State Warriors.

The company also teamed up with the new SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif. – new home for the Los Angeles Rams and Chargers – to provide a first-of-its-kind 70,000 square foot LED videoboard. It is the largest video board at any professional sports venue.

The Bay Center investment was part of commitment in partnership with the Sun Belt Conference, which announced on March 3 that the league will hold its men’s and women’s basketball tournaments the next five years in Pensacola. The event will be March 5-8 with first and second round games both at the Bay Center and Hartsell Arena at Pensacola State College.

“We’re excited about improving the fan experience and game production with this video scoreboard upgrade,” added Keith Gill, Commissioner of the Sun Belt Conference. “The significance of the video board impact isn’t just for the fans -- it’s an opportunity to change the feel of the event for our schools and student-athletes as well. We’re grateful for

our partnership with the Bay Center and are delighted for our women's and men's basketball programs as we host our SBC tournament. This is a wonderful opportunity for our fans to experience a first-rate production and to watch our teams shine.”

The championship games for both men and women will be at the Bay Center and shown on one of the ESPN platforms (ESPN, ESPN2 or ESPNU).

“The new scoreboard will be an awesome, technological improvement to the Bay Center, providing clear, bright displays of game information as well as increased opportunities for sponsorship advertising,” said Cyndee Pennington, long-time Bay Center general manager for SMG and now with ASM Global. “We are truly excited and know that our patrons will be, too.”

ASM Global has a stadium and arena portfolio that includes the Mercedes-Benz Superdome and adjacent Smoothie King Center in New Orleans, along with American Airlines Arena in Miami and the new Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, home of the Oakland Raiders.

Also part of the company portfolio is the US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis, home of the Minnesota Vikings, and the AT&T Center in San Antonio, home of the San Antonio Spurs.

The Smoothie King Center hosted the Sun Belt Conference tournaments since 2014 and was to host its final one this year. But both tournaments were cancelled due to the initial onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic. The league had sought Pensacola prior to the cancellation as a potential new home.

Harris, who has been a full-time resident of Pensacola since owning the team and has been active in a variety of charitable endeavors within the community, is grateful for the new arrangement.

“Throughout this time of great uncertainty, the one thing that has not wavered is my commitment to this franchise and Pensacola, along with the passion for our fans, sponsors, the Bay Center and this region,” Harris said. “I have no desire to own a hockey team in any other city, and I believe that is evident in my investment into the renovations, coupled with the signing our long-term lease.

“We now have the longest lease that professional hockey in Pensacola has ever had. I am beyond excited to be able to provide at least a bit of positivity and certainty for those in our community.”

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