

## New Home, Same Great Tradition

With the demolition of the Bradley Center and a new arena being built, the Milwaukee Bucks NBA team and Marquette Golden Eagles NCAA team were set to go with their future. The budget plan was approved, and workers were scheduled to break ground this summer. However, the team that essentially built the Bradley Center has been forced to find a new home.

The Milwaukee Admirals started playing in the Bradley Center when they were founded in 1998. The arena was initially constructed in 1988, where the first game played was an NHL exhibition game between the Chicago Blackhawks and Edmonton Oilers. The purpose of the venue was for an NHL expansion team, but instead, the Admirals moved in. The bottom line: the Bradley Center was built for hockey. The Bucks then moved in, sharing it with the Admirals. Now, with the Bradley Center outdated and relatively small compared to other professional stadiums, the Bucks decided to build a new platform to play in. The Admirals, who shared the lease at the Bradley Center with the Bucks, were not invited to join the \$500 million super stadium.

Charlie Larson, the Vice President of Communications with the Admirals, said there was never really a negotiation between Harris Turer (owner of the Admirals) and any representative with the Bucks. "They made it clear we weren't going to join them; they were just going forward with their future." Turer claimed there was never any invitation or conversation about playing at the new arena, which slightly surprised him. Another thing that surprised both Turer and Larson was that the new complex would have the feature of having an NHL/NCAA regulation-sized ice rink to be put onto the floor in hopes of hosting NHL exhibition or NCAA hockey tournament games.

When asked if he had any hope about potentially playing at the arena with this feature, Larson claimed he had "no hope whatsoever." He also added that "it's surprising they have that; we know they're not looking for an NHL team, but if they can attract that kind of thing over there, then more power to them." Turer said he has no issue with his team's situation but takes some offense to the Bucks' lease saying they cannot host any minor league or junior league hockey games. With the move to a smaller

setup, and the attention focused on the new structure being built, there is the possibility that ticket sales and revenue could decrease, but Larson doesn't view that as a problem. "We don't think so, but there is a possibility; the thing with the Bradley Center was that any merchandise or concession sales made during Admirals games, the Bucks and the arena itself made most of it. At the UW Panther Arena, that'll be different. Revenue could go down, but there will be more options for income; we received nothing at the Bradley Center, but at our new place, if we sell a jersey, or a hot dog and beer or whatever, we make that profit." It's estimated the Admirals will generate a net income of \$500,000 to \$750,000 for the venue.

Since the arena has only hosted basketball, the Admirals will need to make some upgrades and changes to make it a little more homey and proper for hockey games. The AHL team signed a 10-year lease with the Panther Arena in March, plus \$6.3 million in upgrades to go with it. Larson says that some of those upgrades will include new locker rooms for the home and away teams, new concession stands and other fan accommodations, and of course, lighting needs to be redone to light up the rink for games. The seating section is small, only fitting about 9,600, but Larson has no problem with that. He believes that'll be better for the team, if anything. "9,600 would be a sellout, and we draw about 5,000 to 6,000 per game. In this new arena, that'll make for an amazing, fun, and loud atmosphere. It's smaller, but it'll be a lot more fun, I think."

Most fans probably weren't too happy about the Bucks leaving the Admirals out to dry, but Larson looks at it as more of a new beginning and new opportunity. "Here, we won't have to worry about NBA scheduling or anything like that, and really, we're the primary tenant in that arena. For once, we'll have this as our own. We can call this our own." The Admirals had to share the Bradley Center with the NBA team for over 20 years, which occasionally created conflicts in scheduling. With only the UWM Panthers to worry about, scheduling shouldn't be a big deal. Since they don't have to share a facility anymore, players can essentially practice at their convenience without worrying about a basketball game. With only one other team to worry about, one could say the Admirals are in a better situation at the Panther Arena than they would be at the new one.

Larson just finished his 16th year with the Admirals and said that it's bittersweet leaving the Bradley Center, but he is excited about the future. "It's been a pleasure working with the fantastic staff and getting to know the awesome fans and players; it makes going to work easy." Now, with the Admirals 2016 season starting in an unfamiliar place, Larson and the team are incredibly excited to get started in their new home. "It'll be like Christmas, you know. Waking up and trying all your new toys out, I can't wait. It's going to be a great year."