

SportsBusiness Daily is your Sports Business Resources your sports business news and information source. [Learn More](#)

CBS Interactive

CBS.com

cbs SportsLine.com

CBS
NEWSWhen you get
it right,
it just clicks.**STREET & SMITH'S**
SportsBusiness
DAILY

ARCHIVE SEARCH

Advanced

Home	About Us	Advertise With Us	Marketplace/Classifieds	College & University Program	Subscribe/Trial	My Account
------	----------	-------------------	-------------------------	------------------------------	-----------------	------------

Events & Attractions

Published February 2, 2006

Highlights From This Week's National Sports Forum In Philly

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman was a keynote speaker this week at the **National Sports Forum** at the Loews Philadelphia Hotel. Bettman spoke on a number of issues as part of prepared remarks for roughly 50 minutes and then took nearly 30 minutes of questions from the audience. He noted the resurgence of the NHL since its return from the lockout and stressed that the transparency during the CBA process was key in getting the fans to return to the sport. "We are playing to 91% capacity, which is a 3-4% increase from our last season in 2003-2004," he said. "We knew that our fans had to be included during the [CBA] process. If they got what we were doing, we believed that they would stand by us. Our fans have come back. They understood what last year was all about, and they understood

that we have a better game."

STICK TOGETHER: When asked what advice he'd give to the NFL in their labor negotiations, he said it would be presumptuous of him to give advice, but added, "If you are going to get into a fight in collective bargaining, your owners better be unified and you better be able to go the distance. Know what you are getting in to and see it through, because you need to convince the players that you are serious or else they will think that ownership will cave."

RELOCATION AND EXPANSION: Bettman said the league is content with its 30 teams in their current markets. But with the Islanders and Penguins both in possible relocation situations, he indicated that the Islanders could make a move to Suffolk County (NY) if they are unable to get a new arena in Nassau County, while the Penguins may be "forced out" of Pittsburgh because of "politics" surrounding the team's bid to land a slots license. Bettman said that if expansion or relocation were to occur, Portland, Las Vegas, Oklahoma City, Houston, K.C. and Winnipeg would be among the targeted cities. Bettman, on the NHL's attitude toward Las Vegas: "We are not prudish, but there are issues when it comes to the sports book on our games. If there is no sports book on NHL games, then I am not concerned about it. It's not a bad place to be. Whatever team goes to Las Vegas first, I think, will be very successful."

SPONSORSHIP: A panel discussion titled "Sponsorship: Brought To You By..." provided insight into corporate sponsors' thoughts, goals and objectives. The panel featured PepsiCo VP/Sports Marketing & Media John Galloway, Sirius Satellite Radio Senior VP/Marketing Tola Murphy-Baran, Radiate Sports Group President Steve Lauletta and NovaCare Rehabilitation Senior VP Ray Pennacchia. Following are some notes and quotes from the discussion: Murphy-Baran, on the emergence of the Internet as a destination for information-hungry sports fans, as well as sponsorship dollars and the importance of franchises maintaining interactive Web sites: "If a team wants to make sure that they are engaging and captivating the imaginations of kids, and they're not just going to rest on their 55-year-old fan base, then I think absolutely you have to be online. You have to be online in ways that could encourage the kids to get involved and that means it has to be something where they are participating, ... creating that community site." Galloway added, "I think it will be a very short time period before the merger of TV and the Internet. So, three years from now, we may be saying, 'What is the difference between television and the Internet?'"

NFL FORECAST: All of the panelists agreed that the shift of Monday night NFL games to ESPN next season and Sunday night games to NBC will not hurt the game packages' appeal to corporate sponsors. Lauletta said, "Everyone will watch whatever they can when it comes to the NFL." Galloway added, "I think Sunday night is going to be huge."

REASONS TO BUY: Another session, titled "A View From The Top," featured Ripken Baseball President & CEO Cal Ripken, MLB Senior VP/Corporate Sales John Brody, Palace Sports & Entertainment President & CEO Tom Wilson, NHLE President Ed

Horne and Ravens Senior VP/Business Ventures Dennis Mannion. One of the topics discussed was the importance of the fan's experience. Brody said, "You have to give them other reasons to come beyond winning [to buy season tickets]. If you rely on winning, that's dangerous." Ripken, whose group owns several minor league baseball clubs, spoke of the importance of team involvement in the community to encourage attendance, especially without the lure of MLB stars. But he said teams have to be careful what they associate themselves with and who they have representing them in these community functions. Ripken: "You can do a thousand good things, but if you mess up once, it erases all that."

[Previous Page](#)

[Current Issue](#)

[Advanced Search](#)

[Print This Article](#)