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**Events & Attractions**

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## That's A Wrap: The 9th Annual National Sports Forum Recap

The 9th annual **National Sports Forum** last week at the Wyndham NW Chicago in Greater Woodfield, Illinois, featured a mix of keynote speakers, including MLS Commissioner Don Garber, Churchill Downs President & CEO Tom Meeker and Bears President & CEO Ted Phillips, and breakouts focused on the best practices in ticket sales, sponsorship, advertising, retail promotions and other areas. The conference included a tour and dinner at Arlington Park and a tour and luncheon at the renovated Soldier Field. THE DAILY is the official publication of the **National Sports Forum**. The following is part one of a two-part series highlighting excerpts from the conference.

**SOCCER REVENUES:** Garber during his keynote shared his thoughts on the league's sponsorship revenue, saying, "This league, and its affiliates, Soccer United Marketing [SUM] and other soccer properties, generate \$50 million in sponsorship revenue for soccer in this country, this year. In nine years, that is a significant amount of money. That is a very important barometer, we feel, as to where the sport is today and offers a great opportunity for the future." Garber also discussed the formation of SUM in '02: "We took our owners together, and said, 'We are capturing a bit of the professional market, but we are not tapping into all of soccer, so we need to form our own company, and basically go out and get everything we can associated with the sport, to basically dominate the sport.'"



**Garber, MLS Aiming For Growth In Fan Base**

**BEING THE "PORTAL" FOR SOCCER:** Garber added, "We are not trying to be the NFL, we are not trying to be the NBA or Major League Baseball or the NHL. We are trying to be the best soccer league that we can, we want to be among the best soccer leagues in the world, and we want to be the league here in this country that is positioned as the league that is capitalizing in this new changing environment, an environment we call the new America. The mission is to be the portal where people go to get their soccer. It's about everything that can happen to this sport and we want to be that place where fans go, sponsors go, broadcasters go, municipalities go, to get this sport. That is taken for granted in every other league in this country. People don't question that the NFL is king of football in America, but people don't yet believe that Major League Soccer is the driver of this sport. You have to own your category, you have to lead, if you want to be successful."

**PLAYER ISSUES:** Garber said the league faces a challenge in marketing 14-year-old Freddy Adu: "We have a unique challenge with Freddy because of who is. He is a young boy, and we have to manage this carefully to try and not exploit the opportunity. We will use him in ad campaigns, but we will understand the challenges we have with his relationship with other players." Meanwhile, he said players are also vested to grow the league. Garber: "Our players go out and each of them does a minimum of 100 appearances a year. We don't pay them to do that, it is part of their commitment to go out and grow the sport."

**ON TRACK:** Later, conference guests were given a tour of Arlington Park, a Churchill Downs track located 27 miles north of Chicago. The park's 700,000 square-foot facility sits on 320 acres and has a staff of over 120. The site of the '02 Breeders' Cup, Arlington Park drew total attendance of 46,000. During the regular 100-day racing season May through September, it can draw 35,000-40,000 on one of its busiest weekends. In '03, the track drew a total of 737,369 patrons. During the off-season, the track holds multiple events, including 12 expos/trade shows a year. The track's player/loyalty CRM program, the Twin Spires Club, offers points when customers wager, but more importantly, provides data on the 140,000 members using the program across five CDI

tracks, with 38,000 members in Arlington.

**DATA IS KING:** Churchill Downs' Meeker emphatically stressed the importance of data ownership over three key areas in the horse racing industry: video signal, racing information and wagering platform. Meeker: "What I'm telling you is data is king. You've got to own it, you've got to make sure some third party doesn't get a hold of it. ... You have to control it in your contracts, you have to make sure that your data, particularly as it relates to your customers, is your data and your data alone." Meeker added, "We have the names of people, we know how much they bet, where they bet, what kind of beer they buy."

**IN THE SADDLE AGAIN:** The park's corporate partners range from Miller Brewing, who sponsors a Miller Lite Party in the Park on Friday afternoons, to Pepsi, which sponsors Pepsi Family Days on Sunday. Other partners include A-B, LaSalle Bank, American Airlines, the Chicago Tribune and the Illinois Daily Herald. The

facility includes 17 luxury suites, but none are leased on a year-to-year basis, and instead are offered with weekend and nightly options. During a heavy weekend, Arlington Park will lease about 80% of the available suites. For the season, 72% of patrons at Arlington Park live within 15 miles of the facility, and 88% of the patrons live within a 25-mile radius of the park.



**Arlington Park Hosted NSF Tour,  
And Tuesday Night Dinner**

**AT THE RECEPTION:** Dinner was served at the Million Room overlooking the track, as facility concessionaire Levy Associates served up two entree choices: Herb Roasted Chicken Breast with Parmesan Risotto and Sundried Tomato Oil, or Pasta Carroccio, a Penne Pasta with Artichokes, Spinach and Olives in a Roma Tomato Sauce. The main dishes were complemented nicely by Roasted Baby Red Potatoes with Sauteed Onions and Peppers. In addition to a classic Caesar Salad offering, a Greek Salad consisting of Kalamata Olives, Tomatoes, Red Onion, Cucumbers and Feta Cheese in an Oregano Vinaigrette was also available. To top it all off, attendees were treated to an assortment of Gourmet Cookies, Brownies & Dessert Bars (*THE DAILY*).



**Marketing Adu Will Be  
Challenging For League**

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