



A Regional Initiative to Create Jobs and Economic Growth through a New Entertainment and Sports Complex

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Sacramento Miracle Talk of Town in Orlando

By Christopher Lehane

There's an amazing champion people are talking about in Orlando. The name won't fit on the back of a jersey. The face looks like no one -- and everyone -- you see everyday.

The champion is the people of Sacramento.

It's the fans, business and labor leaders who supported the Kings when their future was uncertain. It's the elected officials who put political currency on the line to keep the NBA alive in the Emerald Valley.

It's all of you.

Central Florida is a long way from Sacramento, but the story has traveled.

Everyone you meet at All-Star Weekend wants to hear about how Sacramento has managed one of the great municipal recoveries in sports history, yanking a team back home after another city had a contract ready to sign, seal and steal.

The All-Star crowd isn't just impressed by how Mayor Johnson convinced the NBA owners and Maloof family not to follow through with the relocation process in 2011.

Insiders in Orlando are amazed by what's happened since the Mayor's trip to New York -- how \$10 million was raised in corporate partnerships and suite sales in a matter of days, how ticket sales blew through the roof, despite an early coaching change and a mediocre team.

Here are the stats knowledgeable NBA observers are tossing around Orlando:

The Kings were No. 1 in overall ticket revenue during the off-season -- the most critical time of the business season for the NBA -- despite the the uncertainties of the lockout and the Sacramento situation. They are No. 2 in group sales, which demonstrates deep community support.

In December, they had more new corporate partners than any other NBA team in the off-season-- and are still among the best.



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Attendance is up 7.4 percent, and the team by the All-Star break had six crowds bigger than 16,000, which equaled the total for such big crowds last season.

The Kings have 85 percent season ticket renewals, plus a 15 percent increase in season tickets -- again, among the best.

Those numbers are the hard data for NBA junkies -- in many ways more important than three-point averages, assists and free-throw shooting percentages.

Without the sort of numbers being generated by the Kings at the box office and corporate partnership desk, there can be no three pointers or assists.

Without the dollar numbers, there can be no Kings.

Sacramento -- the fans, business, labor, elected officials and community leaders -- has stepped up and done its part to create the "perfect storm" for 4,100 new jobs and \$7 billion in economic investment with a new Entertainment and Sports Complex downtown.

Now it's up to the city's negotiating team, the City Council, the NBA and Kings to do their work.

We all know that a deal that's unfair to any party will be unfair to the whole. The new ESC will only work as a true partnership.

Partnership will be the spirit of the People's House.

Sacramento has become the big story this All-Star Weekend in Orlando.

Now it's time to give the folks back home a chance to cheer about themselves.