

Forecast: Complete ice cover by Christmas

■ Expect the green, green turf of soccer, too

By Craig Cooper
QUAD-CITY TIMES

There had been talk before about the need for an ice arena in the Quad-Cities, but each time the talk died out without the rink being built. When an-

other group formed in early 1993, there was an understandable "wait-and-see" attitude from many about the latest attempt.

But with hard work, the right mix of community leaders and support from Quad-City governments and businesses, the wait is over.

Just 18 months after the formation of the Quad-City

Sports Center Association, the Quad-City Sports Center is ready to open on the Davenport riverfront.

Unless there are unexpected delays this week, the first skaters will be on the Quad-City Sports Center rink by Dec. 26. The first soccer tournament on the soccer side of the building will start the same day.

"We're getting down to the end and hundreds of small things are cropping up," said general manager Tom Bahls, a veteran of rinks in Oregon and Colorado.

"There was a period when I think our staff was very excited, but I think right now there is a lot of stress because we are rushing to get open."

The rush is to get open for the holiday school break when students are home for at least a week. There has also been a push to get the pro shop open for Christmas shopping.

"At the very latest, we'll be fully operational about Dec. 26. We're

VITAL STATISTICS

- **Who will use it:** Available year-round to the general public, schools, local organizations and organized athletic leagues.
- **Size:** 65,000 square feet of playing surface, locker rooms, lobby, meeting rooms, concession stand, etc.
- **Seating capacity:** 750 in ice arena, 250 in soccer area.
- **Playing surfaces:** 200-by-100 feet (Olympic size) on ice and 100-by-190 feet for soccer.
- **Amenities:** Six locker rooms with showers, handicapped accessible, concession stand, pro shop.
- **Staff:** At least 6 full-time and 12 part-time employees.
- **Cost:** \$3.1 million, through publicly and privately raised funds.

The great riverfront rebound

By Ed Tibbetts
QUAD-CITY TIMES

It used to be a hobo jungle, a place where the bums and the railroad stowaways would huddle among the coal bunkers waiting for a freight.

Near the old city landfill and the railroad switching yards under the Centennial Bridge, the hobo jungle is now a foggy memory of a bygone era.

Today, the area is an emerging part of downtown Davenport and the new home of the Quad-City Sports Center, a \$3.1 million ice rink and soccer facility that's expected to draw people from

throughout the Quad-Cities.

Though it's intended for the use of all, the facility is particularly important to Davenport in its effort to rebuild downtown and strengthen its connection with the Mississippi River. The city contributed \$115,000 to the arena.

Mayor Pat Gibbs says the facility creates a nice cluster of recreational amenities when coupled with John O'Donnell Stadium. In addition, it puts a new emphasis on the area west of what is traditionally thought of as downtown, he said.

"To me, it's just the beginning

— RIVERFRONT
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The new Quad-City Sports Center ice and soccer arena is located just west of John O'Donnell Stadium.



Larry Fisher/QUAD-CITY TIMES

hoping that the skating side will be ready by Dec. 22 or 23rd," Bahls said.

The Quad-City Sports Center features include an Olympic-size (200 feet by 100 feet) rink with boards for hockey, an indoor soccer field with the same dimensions and same boards, a soccer and skating pro shop, six locker rooms, concessions, rest rooms, offices and a counter area for skate rental and admissions.

One of the most noticeable features is the size of the ice rink and the soccer area. Experienced skaters who haven't been on the ice for a while will quickly notice the size of the rink as they stand gasping for breath after three laps.

"One of the adult league soccer people saw the soccer side and said they'll have to play at least 7-on-7 because of the size," Bahls said. "Young kids may have to play almost with full teams because of the size." Another feature will be

clean air. Instead of a propane-powered Zamboni ice resurfacing machine, the Quad-City Sports Center will have a state-of-the-art Olympia electric resurfacer which runs on a track.

"There are insurance companies which are reluctant to



Bahls

provide coverage if you have propane-powered resurfacing equipment, even though propane is fairly

clean," Bahls said. "Air quality is becoming important to the new skating facilities." The seven people who have been on the board of directors from the start — six more have been added — were convinced that there was plenty of community interest to support the facility, especially if it were

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Sports center nears completion in the Quad-Cities

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None organized on a not-for-profit basis. No one got into it as an investment.

That faith that the community would be interested can be measured by the hundreds of kids and adults who are already signed up for figure skating, hockey and soccer programs. More than 300 youth players and 100 adults have signed up for hockey leagues.

"The interest really hasn't surprised me. We figured that a community of 350,000 could support an ice rink," committee member Fran Ivory said. "The surprise is that there are so many people from Chicago, Minnesota, Canada, Michigan who have transplanted themselves here. We'll have a lot of hockey coaches who grew up around the game."

Ivory said the not-for-profit status was a key to turning the dream into a reality.

"Nothing is impossible, but it would have been very difficult to get the funding for a for-profit building," he said.

Ivory said \$400,000 is still needed to pay fund the \$3.1 million project. More than \$1.5 million has been raised from municipalities and

Quad-City corporations. A "Buy a Brick" campaign is directed at families and small business donors.

Bahls said the facility will likely be open from 6 a.m.-midnight seven days a week and the ice rink will be closed only a week or two in the summer for maintenance.

In the summer months, the soccer side could be used for in-line

skating, basketball or volleyball.

"Skating is a booming business. Most of the facilities being built now are 12-month facilities," he said. "Schools in Minnesota which have had teams for 30 years are now adding girls teams. There is some pressure on the rinks because of gender equity."

Bahls said it may be two or

three years before the Quad-Cities is able to put together youth hockey teams that can be competitive in state and national tournaments.

During the holidays period, there will be three public skating sessions Monday through Saturday, two on Sunday. After that, there will be at least two public sessions seven days a week.