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Snider: Philadelphia will enjoy hosting NHL draft



June 23, 2014, 7:00 am

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TIM PANACCIO

CSNPHILLY.COM FLYERS INSIDER

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In their 46-year history, the **Flyers** have never hosted the NHL draft -- until this year.

This weekend -- Friday and Saturday -- the draft comes to the Wells Fargo Center.



Ed Snider said the NHL draft -- this Friday and Saturday at the Wells Fargo Center -- would be an event he thought "Philadelphia would enjoy." (AP)

Amphitheater at Bensalem

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Rob Parent @ReluctantSE

If Flyers hire Poulin I would have covered team pres. when he was coach, GM, Asst GM, head coach and two asst coaches when they played. **#old**

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Frank Seravalli @DNFlyers

#Flyers tied with Bruins, Capitals, Sharks and Kings for most NBCSN national games (12) for next season.

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"This is the first time we ever asked to host it," Flyers chairman Ed Snider said.

It completes a rare trifecta that former club president Peter Luukko set out to accomplish more than three years ago.

Luukko's vision: Host the Winter Classic (2012), the Frozen Four (2014) and the NHL draft.

Abruptly resigning his post last December and leaving Comcast-Spectacor, Luukko left before he could preside over the final two-thirds of his years-long accomplishment.

While Philadelphia can expect about \$10 million in direct spending, hosting the draft is not a profitable venture for the host team, as it's an NHL-sponsored event.

In many cases, the host team loses money. For the Flyers, the best they can hope for is to break even.

"This is a marketing event for the Flyers," Shawn Tilger, the Flyers' chief operating officer of business operations, said. "The tickets are free. It's one to grow our fan base. You do it because it's the right thing to do for the fan base."

The Flyers dispensed all 14,000 free tickets for both days, and even Tilger was stunned at the demand for tickets.

"People have embraced this event more than I expected," Tilger said. "It's a great sign of how popular hockey is in Philadelphia. We knew we had a ton of Flyers fans and with the Winter Classic, the Frozen Four, they have proven over and over again they love their hockey."

From its inception in 1963, the draft was held in Montreal until 1977. It was almost exclusively at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, though one year it went to another hotel before spending four years at the league's Montreal headquarters.

Starting in 1978, the draft was moved to an NHL area, so fans could attend and it could be turned into something the league could make money off.

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It's hard to say if the draft would have succeeded before in Philadelphia. The Flyers have only asked to host the All-Star Game, which they have, in 1976 and 1992.

"We thought it would be an event Philadelphia would enjoy," Snider said of hosting the draft this year. "In the past, it wasn't anything on the top of our radar. It was an idea we thought about. There was no real reason why we didn't have it before."

In celebration of the draft, the Flyers will host Fan Fest at XFINITY Live! with hockey-themed and family-oriented activities, food and beverages and merchandise.

Admission to Fan Fest is free and it will run from 3:00-6:30 p.m. on Friday and 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. on Saturday.

All 30 NHL teams will be represented on the entryway into the Fan Fest, where fans can play on a full-size street hockey rink equipped with sticks and balls for pickup play and skill challenges for hardest shot, accuracy and stickhandling.

Younger children activities include an obstacle course, a bungee run, a bounce house, a giant slide, a slap shot booth and Twister. A large arcade will allow fans to play games for free and win prizes.

The Marvel Universe Live "Are You Super Hero Enough?" challenge is an interactive experience where participants hone their superhero skills to complete a series of tasks and is a preview of the Marvel Universe Live show coming to the Wells Fargo Center this summer.

"This event is three things at once," Tilger said. "It's a business meeting for the hockey-op guys. It's a live event for the fans attending and then it's a made-for-television event. It's kinda unique that way.

"The league has done a real nice job building and creating a sequence of events from the Winter Classic, to the All-Star Game, to the NHL Awards Show and then the draft. This really helps you grow your fan base."

Comcast SportsNet will be on-site with giveaways and Tap Snap, an interactive photo booth experience. There will also be DJs and face painters.

Philadelphia will be represented by the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Franklin Institute and the Please Touch Museum -- all with interactive stations.

Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, a Philadelphia-based foundation created to find cures for all kids with cancer, will be on-site at both Fan Fest and the Wells Fargo Center' concourse giving away lemonade and collecting donations.

Round 1 of the draft starts Friday at 7 p.m. and continues with Rounds 2-7 on Saturday at 10 a.m. Doors open to ticket holders at 5 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m. Saturday.

Tags:

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E-mail Tim Panaccio at tpanotch@comcast.net .

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