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‘THE STADIUM COSTS WILL NEVER BE RECOVERED’

In the run-up to the UEFA EURO 2012, good news and horror stories interchange almost daily on the state of preparations in Poland and the Ukraine. But what is the real state of play in the two host nations? At the Sports Venue Summit, SPONSOR^s gave a man who should know the answer a chance to speak – Thomas Speck, who, amongst other roles, is the technical director of the stadium project in Wroclaw.

INTERVIEW: LUKAS STELMASZYK

SPONSOR^s: Mr Speck, in all honesty, what is the real state of affairs regarding the UEFA EURO 2012 in the host countries?

SPECK: In Poland we are right on track. The last stadiums have to be match-ready, as per UEFA specifications, by 30 June 2011. Poland will certainly achieve this.

SPONSOR^s: And how do things look in the other host country, the Ukraine?

SPECK: Everything there is still a bit behindhand, especially at the venues that are only financed by the municipality or the state. Under the old government there were a few financing problems, but I’m sure we’ll meet the deadline in the Ukraine.

SPONSOR^s: Have there been fundamental changes as a result of the new government?

SPECK: Yes, the new government has really been forging ahead. Since Victor Yanukovich took office as President, vast amounts of financial support and personnel have been made available. Since then it’s all been going according to plan, even at the more critical stadiums like Kiev and Lemberg.

SPONSOR^s: All the same, we keep hearing horror stories here in Germany.

SPECK: There have always been rumours going around, and they aren’t going to stop. I’ll say it again: when it comes to the stadium infrastructure, the Ukraine is going to make the grade. As for the rest of the infrastructure – roads, hotels and so on – even I still have some doubts.

SPONSOR^s: The threat of transport problems, then, wasn’t made up?

SPECK: With qualifications: the Ukraine is investing a lot in its infrastructure network. But between Lemberg and the venues of Kharkov and Donezk in the east of the coun-



THOMAS SPECK: ‘Willing to help improve things.’

try, we are dealing with distances of more than 1,000 kilometres. Air travel is probably the only option. But as all four venues are being given new airports, there should not be any problem.

SPONSOR^s: And what about accommodation?

SPECK: The Ukraine is still having a very hard time trying to provide sufficient hotel beds for the fans. That is why UEFA is currently considering holding Ukraine matches

in the east of the country. We could then expect more spectators from the local region, and there wouldn’t be as many hotel beds needed as for foreign fans.

SPONSOR^s: You’re painting a rather bleak picture as far as the Ukraine is concerned. So why did you decide on stadium projects in Kharkov and Lemberg?

SPECK: When it comes down to it, I’m involved in this market as a planner and consultant. If there is any way to improve or redo things, I am, of course, willing to help.

SPONSOR^s: We believe there was need for improvement, for example, in Kharkov.

SPECK: That’s true. In the summer of 2009, I was commissioned to draw up a management plan for the stadium. I was then asked to redesign the entire stadium from scratch. We pulled down some of it, and are now working on the reconstruction. The job can be expected to last till the end of the year.

SPONSOR^s: What were the precise reasons for this additional outlay?



VITA

Thomas Speck

At fifty-three years of age, Thomas Speck is vice president of Wroclaw 2012, a 100-per-cent subsidiary of the City of Wroclaw. The company is responsible for supervising the all-round development of the Wroclaw stadium right through to completion of the project. Speck is a member of the management board and technical director of the overall project. A qualified engineer, he is also working in a consultative capacity for two other European Championship stadium projects in Kharkov and Lemberg in the Ukraine. Previously Speck had worked for various national and international construction firms, including Wayss & Freytag AG, Bouygues in Paris, and Walter Bau AG and Alpine Bau GmbH in Austria. At the end of 2007, he also set up the consultancy agency Arenacom, which specialises in the planning, development and operation of sports venues.

MASTERS OF THE ARENAS

Whether they hold 35,100 or 80,000 spectators, stadiums not only differ in terms of their size, but above all in terms of their management. SPONSOR^S asked European stadium managers about the special features of their venues, content strategies and visions for the future.

			
Profile	Domingos Soares de Oliveira	Kurt Krägel	Martin Hohenwarter
Name	Domingos Soares de Oliveira	Kurt Krägel	Martin Hohenwarter
Age	50	n.a.	31
Position	Chief Executive Officer	Head of arena operations and organisation	Stadium and Safety Officer
Venue			
Name	Sport Lisboa e Benfica Stadium	Imtech Arena	Red Bull Arena
City (country)	Lisbon (P)	Hamburg (GER)	Salzburg (A)
Capacity	65,000	57,000	30,188
Uses	Football, concerts, events	n.a.	n.a.
Home Teams	Sport Lisboa e Benfica	Hamburger SV	Red Bull Salzburg
Number of employees	n.a.	150	14
What is the stadium's signature element, what makes it special?	Multifunctional Stadium. The elegant sweeping form of the arches was instrumental in the creation of a visible landmark and an individual identity for the stadium. Where the arches meet in the corners, there is a soaring eagle – the motto for the multifarious sporting institution. The polycarbonate roof of the stadium allows the sun's rays to penetrate it, lighting the stadium. The roof, which is supported by the beams of four steel arches, seems to float on the underlying stands.	UEFA 5-star stadium, compact and open structure, good view from all seats, spectator- and fan-friendly, easy for spectators to find their way around, good transport connections, venue used for the 2006 FIFA World Cup	The Red Bull Arena is the most family-friendly stadium in Austria. As the audience includes lots of families and children, the stadium has a pleasant atmosphere, supported in terms of volume by the Salzburg Südkurve [Southern Bypass]. The stadium's bright colours, with the addition of graffiti, make it an eye-catching spectacle for all visitors – in fact there is nothing like it. With the technical support of the special effect lighting installed (moving heads, colour globes, etc.), the stadium facilities can be used to generate an incomparable display.
What do you consider the current key trends for sports venues and sports venue management?	Technology, sustainability, flexibility	Service-oriented, customer-friendly upgrading of the arena, multifunctionality	Safety! Here it is essential to find a balance between the structural, personnel-related and marketing aspects.
Events			
How many events per annum take place in the arena?	30–40 major events (conferences, corporate events, etc. daily)	30 sport events, 5 concerts, 150 other events	60–70
What sort of events?	Football matches, concerts, conferences, corporate events	Football games, concerts, trade fairs, conferences and congresses	Football games, concerts, seminars, Christmas and anniversary celebrations, product presentations, world record attempts.
What has been the biggest, most important or most impressive event in the last 10 years?	UEFA EURO 2004 final, quarter-final and group phase; New 7 Wonders Official Declaration Ceremony; 7th Match Against Poverty: Ronaldo & Zidane friends vs. SL Benfica ALL Stars; Eusebio CUP	2006 FIFA World Cup & 2010 UEFA EURO League Final	The stadium opening in 2007 with the match between Red Bull Salzburg and Arsenal London FC
What's on the agenda in the foreseeable future?	UEFA Champions League matches; Portuguese League and Cup matches; Friendly match: Portugal vs. Spain (17 th November 2010); EUSEBIO CUP 2011 (August 2011)	Increasing spectator capacity and expansion of VIP areas	In structural terms the VIP and Skybox sectors will be brought up to the highest European level, and the stadium façade will also be upgraded in 2011 with a new covering.

NAMING RIGHTS - GERMANY IS EUROPEAN CHAMPION

Commerzbank Arena, EasyCredit Stadion, Audi Sportpark – since the start of the decade, sponsorship of German Bundesliga football stadiums has become the rule, rather than the exception. But what is the situation in the rest of Europe? Which football arena has the most expensive naming rights? And in which countries has the marketing of stadium names not yet become an established practice?

AUTHOR: HOLGER REHM

The HSV club had ‘sold its soul’. The fans were in no doubt about it, and a major German daily agreed with them. There was massive protest when Hamburg’s Volksparkstadion was rechristened the AOL Arena. That was the first commercial naming right in German professional football – back in July 2001.

With the Imtech Arena, Hamburger SV has now acquired its third naming rights partner, and most of the fans have calmed down again. And no wonder.

The fans have now become relatively familiar with the brand names blazoned on stadium roofs. When it comes to naming rights in football, Germany is the European champion. In no other European professional football league are so many stadium names sold to companies. In the Bundesliga, thirteen out of eighteen match venues have done so.

The accumulated naming rights come to a value just short of €40 m per season. If

Germany’s second division is also included, as many as two-thirds (twenty-four of thirty-six) of clubs have turned their stadium names into cash. In the country as a whole, there are actually thirty-three stadiums and forty-six sports halls with commercial naming rights, as a study by the sports rights agency Sportfive has shown.

Only England comes anywhere near it, at least in terms of quantity. A total of thirty-seven naming rights have been counted in football’s home country. Admittedly, many of these partnerships are to be found in the lower leagues.

The bare figures show that the total licence fees paid annually per stadium in Germany’s Bundesliga is practically unrivalled. As the SPONSOR⁵ study ‘The Top 10 Naming Rights at European Football Stadiums’ has shown, the ten most valuable naming rights in European football feature nine German sports venues. Only the Emirates Stadium in London, the home of Arsenal, makes the top 10 as the only non-German representative.

A German phenomenon?

So far, then, the marketing of naming rights at football venues has only been any fun in Germany. There are reasons for this. Naming rights make the biggest impact when they are marketed on a new building structure. Having hosted the

World Cup in 2006, Germany has ‘the best stadium infrastructure in Europe by a long way,’ Jens Leonhäuser says. Leonhäuser’s agency Steilpass advises building facility company Imtech Deutschland on capitalising naming rights at the HSV arena. It’s also worth bearing in mind, Leonhäuser goes on, that generally the highest prices are paid for sponsoring in Germany.

Ideal conditions, then, for a lucrative business – for German clubs and those who market them. But does this mean that naming rights are a purely German phenomenon?

Not necessarily. In other European countries you can now find many stadiums where the name of a commercial partner is displayed on the rooftops too. ‘The trend in Scandinavia is quite clear, though with less money involved than Germany,’ Ulrik Ruhnau found. The Managing Director of Lagardère Unlimited Stadium Solutions points to the Hartwall Arena in Helsinki, the Ericsson Globe in Stockholm and two stadium projects in Stockholm as examples. Ruhnau then moves on to England, with the Emirates Stadium and the Ricoh Arena, where the Championship team Coventry City now plays its home matches. And even in Poland, a power company – Polska Grupa Energetyczna S.A. (PGE) – has acquired naming rights at a new stadium in Danzig until the end of 2014, for around PLN 35 m, or about €8.5 m.

