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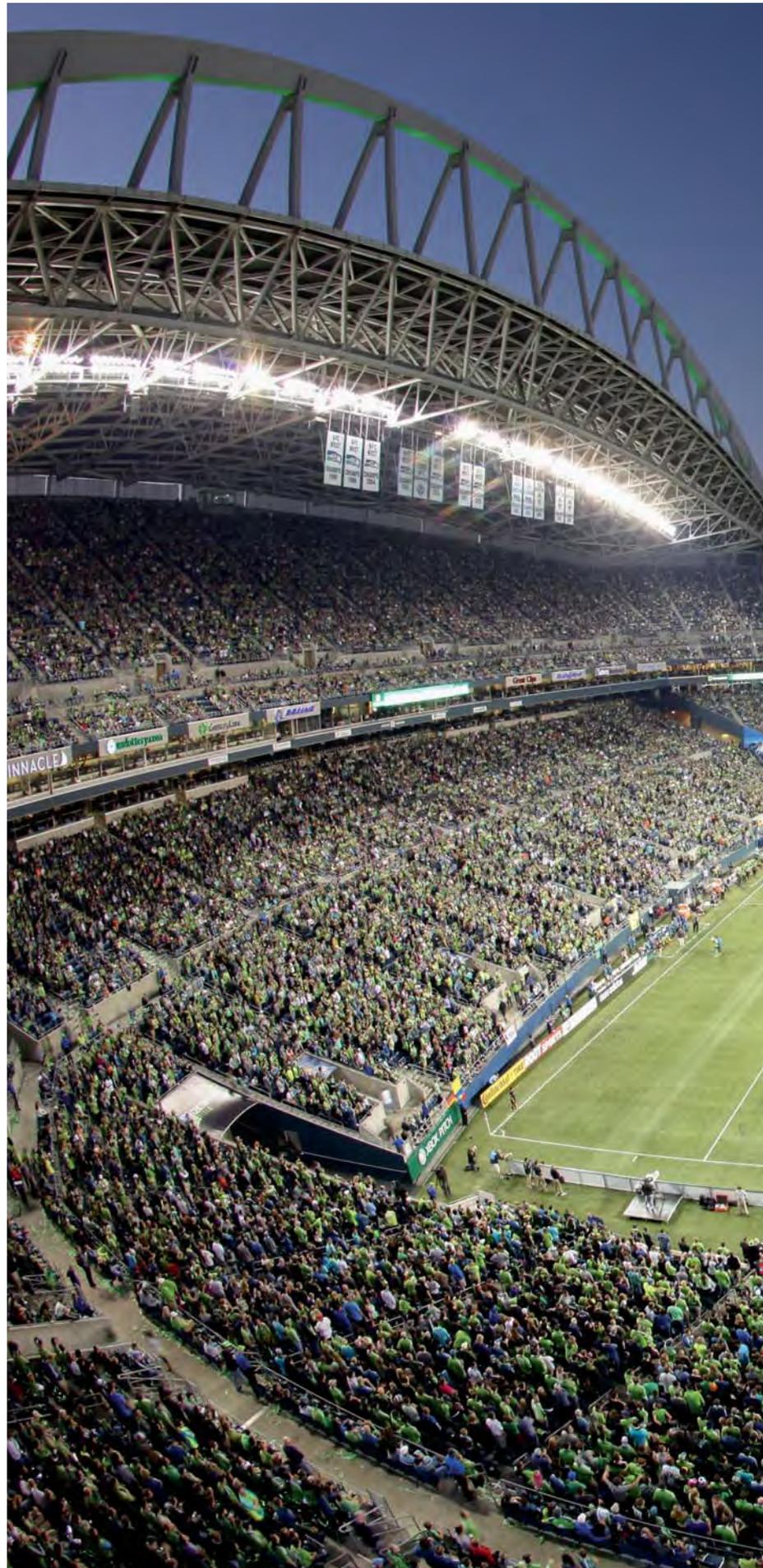
Sports teams and venues see eco-friendliness as a winning game plan

By Ben Raker

A sea of green surrounds the players on the Seattle Sounders FC and Portland Timbers soccer teams. Roaring fans hold their team's scarves high, and paper streamers rain down from the CenturyLink Field grandstands at the first kick of this October 2012 game featuring one of the hottest professional-sports rivalries. With 66,452 people in attendance, this is a record crowd for a Sounders FC home game against a Major League Soccer opponent, and the second-largest crowd in the history of MLS. ESPN is broadcasting the event nationwide.

The Timbers, as visitors, are wearing their Rose City Red jerseys tonight, but the main color for both teams is green: "Rave Green" for the Sounders and "Timbers Green" for the Portland club, which is the color of the scarves its devotees are waving. All that green is particularly appropriate given the importance both teams place on being environmentally responsible.

Seattle Sounders FC and Portland Timbers fans cheer their teams during a game at Seattle's CenturyLink Field, where 90 percent of vendors' food packaging is compostable or recyclable.



Fields of Green





The Timbers' JELD-WEN Field in Portland received LEED Silver certification for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance. Below: One of the team's jersey options features 100 percent recycled materials.

The Sounders play in a stadium, completed in 2002, whose construction reused 35 percent of the concrete from the demolished Seattle Kingdome. Field lessee First & Goal Inc. (FGI)—created by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, whose Seattle Seahawks also play at “the Clink”—began tracking recycling in 2006, reducing by 3 percent the amount of stadium trash headed for landfills. By the end of 2011, 70 percent—more than 500 tons—was diverted from landfills thanks to waste-reduction efforts.

These days, it's hard to find a trash receptacle at the stadium. Most of the bins offer two choices: recycle or compost. To make this work, CenturyLink Field vendors have made more than 90 percent of their food packaging compostable or recyclable (or both). And those streamers that added to the opening spectacle? They'll be swept up and recycled.

In addition, in 2011, FGI installed a 2.5-acre solar array on the roof of the Event Center that's connected to the stadium. The array creates enough energy—830,000 kilowatt-hours annually—to power 95 Seattle-area homes for a year, according to FGI. The organization says the roof and other energy-efficiency projects have reduced carbon emissions by about 1,350 metric tons per year—the equivalent of planting 278 football fields of trees—and have reduced FGI's annual utility costs by 21 percent.

The Timbers also take pride in a green stadium. Rather than building a new facility for the team's inauguration into Major League Soccer in 2011, the organization reduced construction waste by choosing to upgrade the classic 86-year-old stadium, renaming it JELD-WEN Field. The team worked with the builder to recycle materials from the original facility into the upgraded structure, whose \$40 million restoration also included energy-efficient lighting and low-flow fixtures to reduce water use. In August 2011, the U.S. Green Building Council

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awarded the stadium Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance.

The facility's kitchens recycle their cooking oil; edible leftover food is donated to a local charity; and fans are encouraged to use the 57 recycling bins. The team also has racks just steps from the stadium where up to 300 cyclists can lock up their bikes during a match. In bike-friendly Portland, these racks are often full.

One of the team's jersey options—white, with green lettering and a '70s retro look to honor the Timbers teams that played before the franchise became part of Major League Soccer—was designed and made in Portland from 100 percent recycled materials. The logo of jersey-sponsor Alaska Airlines reflects the typeface the airline was using in 1979 when it started regular service to Portland.

Timbers officials say that being located in the eco-conscious Northwest contributes to their commitment to be green. "It's an important part of our ethos to be sustainable," says Chief Operating Officer Mike Golub. "It's part of everything we do, and it's the right thing to do."

Green Sports Alliance

The Timbers and the Sounders are among the many teams, from many different sports leagues, that have made sustainability part of their ethos, recognizing that green initiatives are not only the right thing to do but also offer cost savings, brand enhancement, and opportunities to share positive environmental

Concrete from the University of Washington's old stadium has been used in the foundation for the new stadium, which is expected to open in time for the 2013 football season.

messages with millions of sports fans.

In the early 2000s, various individual teams and leagues began work on environmental initiatives, often in collaboration with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a large environmental-action nonprofit that made it a mission to assist teams that were striving to go green. Conversations between the teams about their projects were limited, however, until the Green Sports Alliance (GSA) was formed.

Founded in 2011, the alliance is a Portland-based nonprofit that helps sports teams, venues and leagues achieve their environmental goals by bringing them together to collaborate, share best practices and develop new strategies. The alliance also partners with advisers such as the NRDC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"Sports hold a real and unique opportunity to incorporate behaviors that make sense bottom line but also make sense for the planet," says Scott Jenkins, chairman of GSA's board and vice president of ball-park operations for the Seattle Mariners. "We can share that message with a really broad audience—and use our iconic venues and iconic brands to help make people aware of the opportunities that are out there."

The impetus for the Green Sports Alliance came in late 2009 and early 2010

when Paul Allen's Vulcan Inc. holding company—which owns the Portland Trail Blazers basketball team as well as the Seattle Seahawks and a share of the Seattle Sounders FC—was working on expanding sustainability initiatives for its teams. Vulcan reached out to the NRDC, which recommended talking to the Seattle Mariners and other teams the organization had been assisting.

“Paul Allen has for years been dedicated to reducing the environmental impacts of his teams, and it soon became clear that other sports teams were interested in reducing their environmental footprints, as well,” says Jason Twill, senior project manager of sustainability at Vulcan and a GSA board member. “It’s no secret that sports inspire American culture and influence us, and our hope is that making sports green will have a positive impact on our communities.”

The Green Sports Alliance officially launched in March 2011 (after informal quarterly meetings in 2010) with six pro teams and five venues as founders. Its ranks have since swelled to nearly 150 members, including teams and venues from 14 different leagues. This group represents the first time that teams from MLB, NFL, NHL, NBA, WNBA and MLS have collaborated on a common agenda to reduce their impact on the environment. The alliance provides support, research, reports, case studies, a clearinghouse for communicating best practices, and educational activities such as workshops, webinars and an annual summit.

The sports world is making important strides, says Justin Zeulner, a GSA board member and the senior director of sustainability and public affairs for the Portland Trail Blazers, whose home venue, the Rose Garden Arena, became the first pro-sports facility to receive LEED Gold for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance, in 2010. The collaboration among alliance members helps to inspire the teams and venues to do even more, Zeulner says.

At the Ballpark

Scott Jenkins, the alliance chairman and Seattle Mariners VP of ballpark operations, says the team's environmental accomplishments have included eco-conscious resodding of the Safeco Field infield in 2011. All of the infield's old turf was gathered and sent to a local composting facility. The stadium also has 600 recycling or composting containers for guests to use, compared with only 16 receptacles for landfill trash, and the stadium concessionaires

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ShoWare Center in Kent, Washington, home of the Seattle Thunderbirds hockey team, named its Zambonis "Recycle Rosie" (above) and "Garbage Gus" to remind fans about the importance of being eco-friendly.

have been phasing in recyclable and compostable serviceware and containers.

"We've completely changed the way we handle our waste, and have done it in a way that saves us money," says Jenkins, estimating that the recycling program saves the Mariners about \$100,000 annually in avoided landfill fees.

The team has also been working to conserve water and save energy, Jenkins says. "Over the last five years, we've reduced utilities costs by about \$1.5 million—approximately 25 percent."

Along with improvements such as installing aerators on water faucets and upgrading lights, the Mariners have invested in technologies such as solar panels on the bridge connecting Safeco Field to its parking garage. The panels help to power four new electric-car charging stations that are open to fans during games.

"Teams and fans are seeing that there is a better way to do business—there's a better way to play," Jenkins says.

He adds that green initiatives help the team attract new sponsors and strengthen ties with existing like-minded ones such as Alaska Airlines. The airline is "taking a leadership role in defining what it means to be environmentally responsible as an airline," Jenkins says. "The Mariners and Safeco Field are doing the same things relative to being a sports team and a sports venue."

Green Ice

The sport of hockey presents special challenges in terms of sustainable operations. Minimizing energy use is harder when you are maintaining an ice sheet at freezing temperatures most of the year. Moist Northwest environments also exacerbate the issue of humidity at hockey arenas,

and dehumidifiers use energy.

Despite these challenges, organizations such as Canucks Sports & Entertainment (CS&E), the ownership group of the NHL's Vancouver Canucks, are actively working "to reduce waste and become environmentally conscious of decisions and how they impact the local environment," says Michael Doyle, CS&E's executive vice president and arena general manager, who sits on the Green Sports Alliance board. He



ShoWare Center was the first newly constructed sports venue in North America to receive LEED Gold certification for New Construction.

says that CS&E has been able to reduce waste by 40 percent since March 2011 by recycling and composting office refuse and refuse from hockey games and other events at Rogers Arena.

Meanwhile, the city of Kent, owner of ShoWare Center, home of the Seattle Thunderbirds, has been busy partnering with the center's manager, Philadelphia area-based SMG, to build on the center's LEED Gold for New Construction certification. ShoWare Center, which opened in 2009, became the first newly constructed sports venue in North America to receive the LEED Gold designation for new construction.

The facility has a "smart" building-management system that saves energy by using historical data to automatically adjust machinery such as heat pumps, air-handling units, dehumidifiers and refrigeration equipment to the most efficient settings.

Byproduct heat from ice-making machines is captured and used to melt and drain the shavings that are pushed off the ice during ice-surface maintenance.

The center also has a rainwater-diversion system that directs clean runoff from the roof to adjacent wetlands, relieving pressure on the city's stormwater system, and SMG wants to introduce compost



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bins in its public areas (it already has a composting program for its back-of-house kitchens and offers recycling in all areas of the arena).

University Participation

Greening university programs also presents interesting challenges and opportunities, according to two alliance-member schools that are pioneering environmental efforts: the University of Oregon, based in Eugene, and the University of Washington, based in Seattle.

Bob Beals, associate athletic director at the University of Oregon, points out that unlike pro-sports programs, which typically feature one team and one sport at a single facility, his program includes baseball, football, lacrosse and other sports, across different venues and with different groups of fans. That means getting buy-in from many constituencies.

"The scale of each event can be different, and the clientele is different," he says. "We strive for a consistency of message as well as experience."

Beals says that Oregon Athletics started tracking recycling rates in 2006 and continues to identify new sustainability initiatives, such as triple-bottom-line purchasing — factoring people, the planet and profit into financial decisions — and installing spigots on drinking fountains so that water containers can be refilled and reused.

The department also wants to make its 85,000-square-foot indoor practice facility a zero-waste-to-landfill zone. Before games, the university opens the facility to fans riding public transit, so that they can have a "tailgating experience" by purchasing food and drinks from vendors. The vendors are using mostly compostable or recyclable food-service items. So far, says Beals, they've succeeded in 75 percent diversion from landfills. And at the stadium, workers have begun two-phase after-game garbage pickup, identifying and gathering recyclables before collecting landfill trash.

At the University of Washington, the biggest greening project relates to renovation of Husky Stadium. The school is seeking LEED certifications for the stadium and a new football-operations building, both scheduled to open in time for the 2013 football season. During the stadium makeover, the UW worked with its construction company to recycle more than 90 percent of the steel from demolished parts of the old stadium.

The builders have also used a machine to crush and recycle 26,000 cubic yards of



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concrete on-site, using it in the foundation of the new stadium, which has avoided significant carbon emissions and costs related to sending truckloads of this material to transfer centers, and has reduced the amount of new concrete needed for the stadium.

After the stadium opens, the UW athletic department plans to implement a two-stream—recycling and composting—waste-diversion system, says Karen Baebler,

Husky Stadium builders have used a machine to crush and recycle 26,000 cubic yards of concrete on-site, using it in the foundation of the new stadium.

assistant athletic director for sports operations. She credits involvement in the Green Sports Alliance as a motivating factor in the UW's decision to take this approach. "We decided on a two-stream system after seeing the success of this at Safeco Field and CenturyLink Field," she says.

In addition, the university is working this basketball season to replace many trash bins with recycling and composting bins at Alaska Airlines Arena, she says.

Baebler says the university sees a lot of value in its GSA membership. "It's great to have so many organizations who have already been through the process. To have those resources and those best practices available to us really helped us move [the school's green initiatives] along much more quickly."

One of the goals of the Green Sports Alliance is to enlist more universities, along with additional members from the Midwest and the East Coast, and even members from other countries.

"We know caring for our environment is important to our fans, and we're excited that so many teams are joining in this effort to improve our communities," says Vulcan's Jason Twill. ■

Horizon Edition Magazine Associate Editor Ben Raker has an MBA in sustainable business.

Other Northwest teams in the Green Sports Alliance range from the Seattle Storm to the Edmonton Capitals. For more information, go to greensportsalliance.org.



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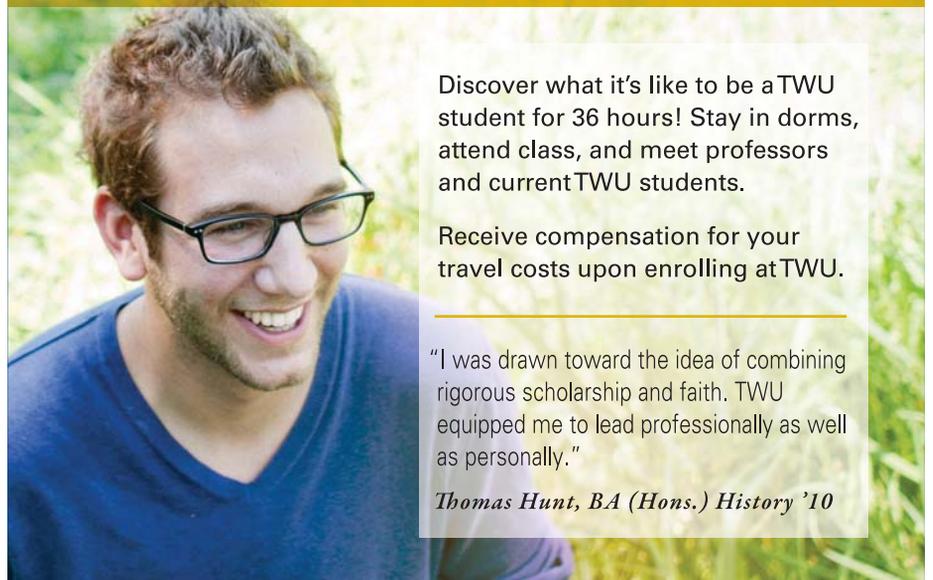
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