



AP Photo/Ryan Kang, File

In this Aug. 13, 2016, file photo, the Los Angeles Rams take the field at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum for a pre-season NFL football game against the Dallas Cowboys in Los Angeles.

From functional to fancy, NFL stadiums have made a huge leap

By DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Pro Football Writer

Next summer, the Raiders are slated to relocate to Las Vegas and begin playing in a sleek \$1.8 billion dome with a transparent roof, a black glass exterior to match their boldest uniform color, and retractable doors to frame an 80-foot-tall and 215-foot-wide view of the casinos on the strip.

Around the same time, the Rams and Chargers will settle in a Los Angeles suburb in a futuristic, covered-yet-light-filled stadium straight out of "The Jetsons" cartoon. It will be the centerpiece of a 298-acre entertainment and lifestyle complex originally projected to cost \$2.6 billion that could come close to doubling in price.

Two years ago, the Falcons moved into Mercedes-Benz Stadium, a \$1.6 billion facility in Atlanta with a pinwheel-like cover that opens and closes like a camera lens. The season before that, the Minnesota Vikings arrived at U.S. Bank Stadium, a \$1.1 billion venue with the league's first translucent roof, five pivoting glass front doors facing the Minneapolis skyline, and a ship-like shape reflecting the region's Nordic heritage after extensive cultural research by the designing architectural firm HKS.

In 2010, the New York Giants and New York Jets kicked off at \$1.6 billion MetLife Stadium in New Jersey with an official NFL-high seating capacity of 82,500. In the previous year, the Dallas Cowboys unveiled their new \$1.1 billion suburban home with a high-definition, four-sided, center-hung videoboard that's 160 feet long, equal to four city buses, and 71 feet high.

These venues being added to the league over the last decade sure have taken quite the leap from Lambeau Field.

Of course, even that hallowed home of the Green Bay Packers that opened in 1957 has undergone two significant renovations since the turn of the century. The NFL's smallest city has modernized and monetized the stadium and surrounding development.

Of the current 32 teams, seven remain in facilities erected prior to 1995 — sort of. One, the Chicago Bears, moved out in 2002 so Soldier Field could be completely rebuilt on the same site. Only the exterior colonnades endured the \$690 million renovation. The Miami Dolphins had Hard Rock Stadium (1987) remade for \$500 million.

Attending a game has become as much about experiencing the immediate area and enjoying the amenities as simply watching four quarters of football.

"They have a personality. They have a powerful formal expression. They do things to create an iconic, globally recognizable facility," said Bryan Trubey, a principal architect at HKS, the lead designer on the Rams-Chargers, Vikings, and Cowboys projects. "For a billion dollars, you should get something that the rest of the world looks at and recognizes instantly, whether there is a name on it or not."

The league has embarked on its 100th season, triggering a natural reflection on the transformation of the game from humble, helmetless beginnings to a business with more than \$14 billion in annual revenue that draws more 100 million people to watch the Super Bowl on television. Perhaps no aspect has evolved more drastically than the places where these games are played.

"Without the people present to make the stadium a reality, they never would have

happened, but stadiums can and should be celebrated for the moments in history that occurred within their confines," said Eric Grubman, a former NFL executive who worked heavily on the development of new venues. "The great game, the great sadness, the great celebration, whatever it may be."

According to Pro Football Reference's online database, 166 stadiums have hosted at least one regular season game since the NFL began. That includes rival leagues — the All-American Football Conference (1946-49) and the American Football League (1960-69) — that were eventually absorbed. One hundred of those venues have hosted 17 games or more.

Over the first half of the league's life span, teams were frequently shoehorned into baseball parks where baseball clubs took top billing. The Bears played at Wrigley Field for 50 seasons. The Giants had long-time homes at the Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium. The Cardinals, now in Arizona after moving from St. Louis, were tenants at Comiskey Park and Wrigley Field where the franchise originated in Chicago. Then there were the pre-war public works projects like Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, where the Rams returned in 2016 from St. Louis after first playing there from 1946-1979. Cleveland Municipal Stadium housed the Browns for a half-century before their move to Baltimore that embittered the lakeside city. On through the AstroTurf era of the 1960s and 1970s, when several teams moved with their baseball counterparts into cookie-cutter circles with few frills, stadiums were still primarily taxpayer funded. By the time the mid-1990s came, though, multi-purpose was out. Fancy was in.

Undersized Hughes stands out as top NHL draft prospect

By JOHN WAWROW
AP Hockey Writer

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Dan Marr will never forget the first time Jack Hughes landed on his radar as a potential top NHL draft prospect.

It happened last summer, when the NHL Central Scouting director was attending a skills camp in Toronto.

After listing New Jersey's Taylor Hall, Edmonton's Connor McDavid and then-Islanders captain John Tavares as the best three players on the ice, Marr added: "The next best player was Jack Hughes."

Even at 5-foot-10 and 170 pounds, Marr said the 17-year-old stood out for a variety of reasons.

"It was a series of drills that they were doing that involved skating, quickness, speed, execution, precision. And right away you could see he already has an NHL shot," Marr said Friday, speaking at the NHL's annual pre-draft scouting combine being held in Buffalo. "So he's got the talent that he belongs in that group."

Very little has happened to change Marr or anyone

else's mind since.

From Orlando, Florida, Hughes is Central Scouting's top-ranked North American skater after spending the past two seasons setting USA Hockey National Team Development Program's record by combining for 228 points (74 goals, 154 assists) in 110 games.

Finland's Kaapo Kakko is the top-ranked European skater after completing a season in which he helped his nation complete a gold-medal sweep of international titles by winning the world championship last weekend, the world junior title in January and the Under-18 title last year.

The two are projected to be selected with one of the two top picks — the Devils select first followed by the New York Rangers — at the NHL draft at Vancouver, British Columbia on June 21-22.

After joking he'd look good in either a red Devils' or blue Rangers' jersey, Hughes said he'd obviously prefer to go first.

"You always dream of being No. 1," Hughes said. "You don't dream of being two, three or four when you're a young kid."

Hughes is also aware of how he and Kakko will draw comparisons with the likelihood of the two playing on Metropolitan Division rivals. "We'll be linked to each other for a lot of years with the Rangers and Devils right there," Hughes said.

Kakko is not attending the combine because of the week-long event, which includes player-team interviews and medical testing, began a day after Finland beat Canada to win the world championships in Slovakia on Sunday.

"It has zero affect really," Marr said about Kakko's absence. "I think the teams understand that. And the teams at the top, they're just going to have to spend a little bit more time with him when he comes over for the draft."

The two players differ in size and style of play.

At 6-foot-2 and 194 pounds, Kakko is known for his goal-scoring ability and considered more of a power forward.

He led Finland with six goals in 10 games at the World Championship. His 22 goals in the Finnish Elite League last season were the most by a draft-eligible player.

Seahawks sue former draft pick McDowell for bonus repayment

DETROIT (AP) — The Seattle Seahawks have filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Michigan seeking repayment of a nearly \$800,000 of the signing bonus given to former draft pick Malik McDowell claiming he violated his NFL contract.

The Seahawks filed the suit this week in the Eastern District of Michigan

seeking \$799,238. McDowell was a second-round pick of the Seahawks in 2017, but never played a snap for Seattle after suffering serious injuries in an ATV accident prior to the start of training camp before his rookie season.

According to the lawsuit, an arbitration hearing last February found that McDowell had "breached

paragraph 3 of his NFL Player Contract," and as a result was ordered to repay his signing bonus within 30 days. The Seahawks say they have not been paid.

McDowell was waived by Seattle in March after spending the past two seasons on the non-football injury list.

The *Detroit News* first reported the lawsuit.

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ROUTE:
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WHO MAY ENTER:
Any Individual, Organization or Business - ALL ARE WELCOME

JUDGING:
All Entries will receive a participation ribbon.
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YOUTH GROUPS • EQUESTRIAN (2 riders or less)
EQUESTRIAN GROUPS • EQUESTRIAN GROUPS - Royalty
HORSE & BUGGY/WAGON

In Addition, the VFW will award the "Patriot Trophy" to the entrant with the most overall votes (Winner of Patriot Trophy not eligible for additional trophies)

ENTRY FORMS:
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You may also mail requests to VFW Post 922 • PO Box 787 • Pendleton, OR 97801 or email requests to: fbradbury@yahoo.com

★ Questions? Call Fred Bradbury at 541-377-7474 ★

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