

We want a rec center just like the one in Broomfield. Or, not.

Often, it would be helpful if one could live the future before living the present.

Maybe if Cheyenne city government had a crystal ball they could have avoided some of the serial mistakes in judgment that they've made. Maybe, not probably.

Remember in the over-hyping of the value of having a rec center here that a bunch of the headnoddors journeyed to Broomfield, Colorado to tour, salivate and report back on the successful operation down there?

That's a common practice for elected officials in Cheyenne and Laramie County - want to be a Colorado city to which we are totally dissimilar. Boulder for control over its residents. Fort Collins for the Old Town concept that is marginally appealing and dubiously successful. Ault for its landfill. Nunn for its spiffy water tower sign. Denver for, well, for Denver.

So, the group chartered an air-conditioned bus, allowing Reed Eckhardt to sit next to the driver so he wouldn't pout, and took a trip to the Broomfield Rec Center.

Not that the insiders thought they needed more ammunition to convince voters to approve the excessively expensive new rec center. After all, it was to be located in zip code 82009 and the daily newspaper supported it with their daily dose of drivel. They knew they'd win that vote.

What the uninformed who traveled to Broomfield got most excited about were the minor league basketball and hockey teams that played there.

A team in the NBA Developmental League - a team that included UW's own Josh Davis - played at the Broomfield Events Center and did very well. The team was called the Colorado 14ers. They won the D-League championship in 2009. Attendance at games was poor (~1200) in spite of success. Capacity for both basketball and hockey games is 6,000. More seats can be added for concerts.

The Rocky Mountain Rage are a hockey team in the Central Hockey League - the same league as the Colorado Eagles of Windsor/Loveland. A natural rivalry existed. The hockey team, probably helped by fans from the uber successful Eagles, had much better attendance than did the 14ers in the 2008-2009 season.

The Broomfield Events Center has proven to be a major financial drain and recently

was turned over to a management team including Phil Anschutz. The Events Center, with millions more to draw from, has been open less than three years.

If they could not attract enough fans for an NBA Development League team, which at times had players on their way to and from NBA teams, especially the Nuggets, just think how bleak the potential would be for Cheyenne. Casper has had a CBA team in the past as well as lower level hockey teams. About the only thing that can make it in these small Wyoming markets is indoor football. Or, a minor league baseball team financed by a parent club such as the Casper Ghosts (formerly the Casper Rockies).

The joint venture between AEG and SMG which will run the Broomfield Events Center in the future, took over because, according to a published report, the current operator of the beautiful but unmanageable facility said, "its resources are limited." It was an unsuccessful venture.

Remember how in Cheyenne, city officials will always claim that a new project will be profitable, i.e. the parking garage, the Belvoir, the rec center, the Civic Center, the IKON Center, etc., etc. Then, none ever are. None.

Had voters approved a new rec center based on the representations of the mayor, city council and daily newspaper, it wouldn't have taken three years to learn it would be a huge financial drain.

When city government, or county government for that matter, dreams about a project, they need to bring in independent professionals to determine the potential of such an undertaking. Those elected seldom, if ever, have the background, experience or expertise to make those costly decisions.

The new BEC management team may decide to keep the hockey team but it is doubtful. They are stuck with the hockey/basketball configuration and 6,000 seats, with private boxes, etc., is way more than a community needs for rec league sports. Broomfield Events Center is a magnificent facility. But it was an undertaking even a Denver suburb could not support. What our people need to do is just watch film. Don't spend the taxpayer's money to take trips - they won't know what they're looking at whether in person or by film.

It is sad, indeed, for the BEC to fail. But it is a blessing we didn't follow them.

Note a new Cheyenne Herald e-mail address:

cheyenneherald@yahoo.com

(Instead of cheyenneherald@bresnan.net)

Both will be active for awhile, but a conversion will likely be made over the coming weeks.

The Denver Broncos and the NFL

Most fans of professional football don't quite understand how the NFL works. And fewer grasp just how little the NFL cares about its fans. Fans don't have to understand. Nor do teams have to care.

An owner like Pat Bowlen, who had his fortune handed to him, can bring in a new and unproven head coach and allow that child to decimate a team because Bowlen knows that fans will not turn away from his team. An NFL team now has eight regular season home games. Home fields seat 63,000 - 80,000 spectators.

Major league baseball stadiums have seating capacities of about 35,000 (expandable) - 52,000. The largest and only one over 52,000 is the original Los Angeles Dodgers stadium at Chavez Ravine (called something else now), which holds 56,000. Single-use stadiums are small.

In the NFL, teams often sell out. In 2008, the best home field attendance total was by the Washington Redskins. In eight games, they "drew" 708,835. The worst was for the Detroit Lions, who were winless (0-16) for the season. They had home attendance of 435,979 for the eight games. That was still 84% of capacity. The only other NFL team admitting to less than 90% capacity was Miami.

The Denver Broncos and San Francisco 49ers did not disclose 2008 home attendance figures.

The best draws on the road during the 2008 NFL season were Dallas (103.4%) and Pittsburgh (103.5%). Neither sold out at home, though. The most popular team at home, naturally, was the Green Bay Packers, in spite of the poor season they had with Aaron Rodgers at quarterback (116.3% of capacity). And, surprisingly, the Detroit Lions were not the worst draw on the road. San Diego was, with Seattle close behind. The Lions sold out on the road. Go figure.

The average home attendance in the NFL for 2008 was 68,000 - 70,000, about 550,000 for the year - the eight games.

In most NFL cities, not all, but most, there are waiting lists for season ticket sales. In Green Bay, the waiting list is in the tens of thousands. Few will live long enough to see their name move to the top.

Major league baseball teams play 162 regular season games a year - 81 at home. No MLB team could survive with season attendance of 550,000. That would be an average attendance of 6,790 per game. In their final year at Yankee Stadium, the Yankees drew 4,298,655, an average of 53,069 per game. The Mets drew 4,042,047, an average of 51,165 a game - IN THE SAME CITY!

The Boston Red Sox play to an AVERAGE crowd of more than capacity. They draw an average of 37,632 (3,048,520 for the season - 81 games) to tiny Fenway Park. Only Florida (the Marlins) averaged less than 20,000 a game in 2008 but had a season attendance of 1,335,075, almost twice the season attendance of the best NFL team. The Colorado Rockies had a "down" season in 2008 and drew 2,650,218 fans for the season. In 2001, the Rockies drew 3,160,115 and in their first season, played in cavernous Mile High Stadium, exceeded 4.0 million in home attendance.

So, let's not hear anything about football being "America's game." Baseball is still "America's Pastime" and always will be.

With few home games and support of fans due to limited exposure, team owners like Al Davis and Pat Bowlen can treat players like slaves. No team needs any single player. They can give everything short of their life as Al Wilson did and be thrown over the side at any time - for any reason. Last year, without Brett Favre and in spite of four home losses, the Packers played home games in front of crowds at 116.3% of capacity.

I once had business dealings with former NFL quarterback Bobby Douglass. He told me, and I'm not sure I totally believed him then, that owners have no loyalty to any player - be it Walter Payton, Joe Montana, Brett Favre or Jay Cutler. They don't need any single player for a franchise to be profitable. Losing teams have good attendance - or at least good ticket sales. Last year, the Kansas City Chiefs were 2-14 and had the fourth (4th) highest home attendance figure.

A "contract" with an NFL player means only the guaranteed money will be paid - the rest doesn't have to be if the player does not play or is cut. No play, no pay.



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