

Leading the Way

FIVE CHAMPIONS OF THE STADIUM SHARE
THEIR TREASURED INSIGHT.

By Bobby Hart

It was a long voyage with chapters of adventure and choppy waters, but thanks to the tireless leadership, vision and determination of five pioneers, U.S. Bank Stadium navigated its way to a successful opening.



The Chair
**MICHELE
KELM-HELGEN**

Chair, Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority

ever had was as chair of the school district out in Eastern Carver County, which was a rapidly growing district. Over 10 years as I was chair, we built three elementary schools, a middle school and a high school, so obviously on a much smaller scale.

Q: What's been most unique about this stadium experience for you as a part of your life and job?

A: I was appointed by the Governor and so my focus is the protection of the state's interest, yet everything we do has to be jointly agreed to by the Minnesota Vikings. I think it's

also probably one of the biggest challenges that we've had and I think we've certainly figured out a way to work together, which is really important. To balance the state's interest, which is what the Authority represents, along with the Vikings' interest, which clearly the team represents, and come to agreement and yet balance those various interests, I think that's probably the most unique aspect of the process and also the most challenging. The fact that we were able to stay on schedule and keep the project on budget shows that the process we put in place, that the state legislation outlined through this Stadium Development Committee, has been very successful.

Every dollar. Every major decision. All things important to the U.S. Bank Stadium project has needed the approval of Michele Kelm-Helgen, chair of the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority (MSFA) and one of four members (along with Mark Wilf, Don Becker and Ted Mondale) of the Stadium Development Committee.

Appointed as the MSFA chair by the Governor in June 2012, Kelm-Helgen oversaw the design and construction process for the stadium, as well as handling external communications with all stakeholders, the city and county, and of course the purple partners in the project, the Minnesota Vikings.

Prior to her role as MSFA's chair, Kelm-Helgen served as deputy chief of staff for legislative affairs for Governor Mark Dayton

from 2010-2012, and was chief of staff for the Minnesota State Senate from 2006-2010.

Q: Have you ever worked on a project close to this magnitude before?

A: Certainly nothing of this size and scale from a construction standpoint. I've run a lot of big projects and divisions. I ran a division at Ceridian, I was also the chief of staff of the Minnesota State Senate. And of course as part of my job with the Minnesota State Senate and the Governor's office, I was involved in negotiating and putting together the state budget, which is \$34 billion, so considerably bigger than this project. But from a construction standpoint, the closest experience I

Q: What's been the most rewarding part of seeing this project come to fruition?

A: The state had some very aggressive equity goals for both Minnesota minority and women workers (38 percent combined) on the project as well as Minnesota minority and women-owned businesses (20 percent). The fact that we've been able to meet and actually exceed those goals is nothing short of remarkable. The other piece is just seeing the Minnesota companies that are involved in the project. Over 90 percent of the work has stayed with Minnesota firms. That, to me, has been very important. Keeping all this work within the state was important. It has really made a big difference in those firms' business and communities.

Q: Any examples or stories you can share about the stadium stimulating the local economy?

A: Daktronics won the contract to do all the LED, scoreboards, videoboards, which are everywhere in and outside the stadium. It's a huge contract and a big piece of business. We didn't have Minnesota-headquartered companies that bid on this contract. Daktronics is headquartered in South Dakota. As a part of their bid, they said they have a large manufacturing plant in Redwood Falls, Minn. and said, "We'd manufacture the whole thing at our Redwood Falls plant. We'll expand the footprint of that plant by 30,000 square feet, we'll hire 100 extra workers and this will be permanent space and permanent jobs in this community." That to me is just a great story and sort of exemplifies some of the impact that this project has had. Before the stadium even opened, there was over \$1 billion in private construction happening all around the stadium. It really was Wells Fargo building those two office towers and then that large park that was a public-private partnership with the Authority, the City of Minneapolis, the Vikings, Ryan Development that started the development boom in East Town. It was an incredible feat to have that park come to

fruition, and along with that we have those two Wells Fargo office towers, which represent \$400 million in private economic development and 5,000 jobs and a lot of residential construction right around that park.

Q: Is there anything that sticks out to you that you think will knock the socks off event planners and their attendees?

A: [Mystic Lake's] Club Purple is a unique space never before seen in an NFL stadium. It's just a beautiful space. To top it off, it's got an outdoor deck that overlooks downtown with a fire pit and outdoor bars. There's not going to be anything quite like it in the Twin Cities. We have 32 rows of retractable seating on the field for baseball, but that space can also be used for floor shows and conventions. We can offer one of the largest floor areas for any of those events—that's also true for concerts. We hosted Luke Bryan and Metallica, and their sound engineers were very happy and the promoters want to come back again.

Q: Considering you have been so involved in this stadium project since the very beginning, do you have anything that stands out as a favorite space or feature of the stadium?

A: I think one thing that's really fun that we made sure we did is we've got two concourses that go 360 degrees around, and when we started the first year when I was chair, we went around the state and had listening sessions all over Minnesota and we asked people what they wanted to make sure was included in the stadium, and probably the biggest thing was rollerbladers, walkers, runners said, "We want to be able to use those concourses as we did at the Metrodome." The biggest difference is not only do you have the beautiful wide open concourses, they all have open views to the stadium bowl as well. So that's probably one of my favorite features because it's certainly something that the people seem to care a lot about.

Q: What's a major goal that you're shooting to accomplish within the first year of opening the stadium?

A: The Vikings have the stadium for their 10 games every year. The other 355 days are available for groups to rent, girls and boys soccer championships, high school football championships, and we'll run 24 hours a day

"Over 90 percent of the work has stayed with Minnesota firms. That, to me, has been very important. It has really made a big difference in those firms' business and communities."

—MICHELE KELM-HELGEN

baseball games for high schools and colleges for about five or six weeks so that these teams don't have to travel in the spring to get their home games in. So I think the multipurpose nature of the stadium is really important to demonstrate this first year. We successfully hosted two major concerts booked back to back. We had an international soccer game prior to those and many other events are scheduled. This showcases the uses and purposes of the stadium and this multipurpose venue is really important to the state.



The Viking LESTER BAGLEY

*Executive Vice President of Public Affairs
and Stadium Development, Minnesota Vikings*

Hard to argue with him on that. Bagley was hired by Red McCombs, previous owner of the Vikings, to start a stadium campaign. He not only started it, but as the Vikings' lead advocate working with legislative leaders, the governor and business community leaders, he also finished it.

Q: You've been through quite a campaign. What really drove this stadium project for you?

A: What's going to be outstanding is the fan experience, and since the legislation passed in 2012, the Vikings and the Wilf family have invested an additional \$130 million, so we're nearing \$607 million as a team-private contribution. Everything that we've done in our additional investment and overall investment has gone toward the fan experience, so we're trying to make this the best experience for the fans. We have the closest seats to the action, the stadium is for all seasons with the transparent roof and the pivoting glass doors provide that indoor-outdoor experience. I think it's going to be the best fan experience in the NFL, and that's what our focus has been on.

Q: What was the biggest challenge when planning and creating the new stadium?

A: This is the largest construction project in the history of Minnesota and there are multiple partners both public and private, so it's an extremely complicated project. To get everybody to work together and to keep all trains running on time has been a massive undertaking. The good news is it was on budget and on track and on time, so that in itself is a major accomplishment on a very, very complicated project.

When recalling how many years he's spent on the U.S.

Bank Stadium project, Lester Bagley doesn't have enough fingers to count. He envisions the timeline and process he knows all too well in his head.

"We started an advocacy campaign in 1999 and started bringing it forward to the capital in 2000," recites Bagley, who oversees communications, community outreach and relationships with public partners, among other responsibilities for the Vikings management team. "So it was 12 years at the capital and then four years once the bill passed in May of 2015. They spent four years on design and construction, so 16 years total. I think I have the record for longevity on the project."

Q: What has been the most rewarding aspect of planning and creating the new stadium?

A: I think this has been an incredible team effort, particularly within the Vikings organization all the way through the last 16 years, it's been, ownership, management, companywide, a priority. But on the stadium itself in a team effort with the Mortenson Construction, with HKS Architects, with the MSFA and now with SMG on board, it's been really an outstanding team effort, and the great news is we're going to deliver a great venue not only for Vikings fans but for everyone in the community, so that's what I think has been most rewarding.

Q: What are some of your favorite features of the stadium?

A: The scoreboards, which are the 10th largest in the NFL. So they're not the largest, but they're the best because of where they're located. They're right in the natural line of sight of fans in either end zone. The scoreboards are going to be great. The gathering spaces: [Mystic Lake's] Club Purple, which has the outdoor deck overlooking the city—that's going to be awesome. This new northeast expansion space, which includes a lodge bar and group cabins, is part of the gathering spaces where fans can hang out. I think the other thing that's exciting is the in-stadium app, which is part of the fan experience. Fans will know the traffic situation, and the best routes to the stadium, and when they get to the stadium, they'll have information on parking and where there's available parking. There will be gameday highlights, instant replays and opportunities to order food.

“We would not have gotten the 2018 Super Bowl or NCAA Final Four in 2019 without the new stadium.”

—LESTER BAGLEY

Q: What does this stadium mean to the Minnesota Vikings as an organization and how vital is it to the organization's future success?

A: It's part of the energy and momentum in the Vikings organization. There's no doubt a lot of great things are happening: Our team just came off winning the NFC North and is playing very well, and the stadium is part of that rise of the organization. It boosts the energy, morale and comradery within the organization from the players to the staff to the coaches and front office. There are great things happening for the Vikings on and off the field, and the stadium is helping to build that energy and momentum.

Q: Can you share the feedback you've received about the stadium from neighboring businesses?

A: We've received tremendous feedback. Obviously the stadium has been a catalyst for a lot of development in the [East Town] area of

Minneapolis. The city of Minneapolis sold a record \$2 billion in building permits last year and more than half have been focused in the [East Town] area. I think the feedback we've received is about the progressive design; this stadium is going to be a signature element of the Minneapolis skyline. Inside the building, the business leaders, the partners and neighbors that have been through the construction process are very excited. They're really blown away by the design, look and feel of the building both inside and out.

Q: What kind of impact can you foresee the new stadium having on the area and local economy?

A: We advocated for 12 years at the capital that the stadium was going to deliver jobs, economic development, national and international events and would be a catalyst for growth in the neighborhood, and I think the results have proven that the stadium is delivering on that promise and actually exceeding what we even advocated. The stadium is a \$1.1 billion project, 90 percent of those dollars are going back to Minnesota's economy. There were 1,400 construction workers on the job [at one time]. There has been a tremendous amount of work and jobs created. We would not have gotten the 2018 Super Bowl or NCAA Final Four tournament in 2019 without the new stadium, so the stadium has delivered on all those things we advocated for and will continue to do so in the events that have already been booked.

When it comes to the construction of U.S. Bank Stadium, the largest public-private project ever in the state of Minnesota, the schedule has always been a key part of the plan. The schedule John Wood, senior vice president of Mortenson, and his team put together for completion of the job was part of the proposal to MSFA back in December of 2012. "And that is essentially the plan we have followed ever since," says Wood, who, in his 40th year with Mortenson, was the principal in charge of the U.S. Bank Stadium project. "One of the things that distinguished Mortenson in the sports construction business is when we say complete, we mean complete. Or as we like to say, done is done."

And it was done six weeks ahead of schedule. "That's somewhat unusual in the business of building sports facilities because quite often at the first event there are still parts of the building that aren't finished, there are guys in hard hats walking around," Wood says. "But we don't operate that way."

Wood's first stadium project was Target Center in 1990, and he's also overseen the stadium projects for Minnesota's other two pro sports teams: Target Field and Xcel Energy Center.

Q: You've worked on some major local stadium projects. What is unique about this one for you?

A: The unique and exceptional architecture of the project. I believe it's the best NFL stadium in the country. We had a unique contract for this project with some extraordinary risks as the construction manager. So it required an exceptional level of oversight to ensure that we were not only delivering on what we promised, but we were ensuring success for ourselves as well as our customer. It's the largest project in the state. It's the largest project Mortenson has ever undertaken as a sole venture.

The Builder

JOHN
WOOD

Senior Vice President, Mortenson

Q: What has been the biggest challenge for you and your team to overcome when building the new stadium?

A: There has been a variety of challenges that come with the territory, so to speak, on a project of this size and complexity. The demolition of the Metrodome had its own complexities that needed to be overcome to ensure that building could be demolished safely. We were pleased to be able to execute it in that way. The steel structure of [U.S. Bank Stadium] was particularly complex, and thanks to the phenomenal work of LeJeune Steel, the steel fabricator, and Danny's Construction, the steel erection company, both local firms, it was really a flawless performance by those contractors. It really helped enable us to keep the project on schedule and deliver the kind of quality that the building represents.

Q: What has been the most rewarding aspect of planning and creating the new stadium?

A: The most rewarding part has been working with the phenomenal men and women that have made up the work force on the project. Just the level of craftsmanship, work ethic and ingenuity of the construction team has been something that has been very impressive for me. I've been very proud to be a part of it. We've had just an incredible team of subcontractors and specialty contractors that have made up the overall project team.

Q: What is something about the stadium that you think will pleasantly surprise event planners and attendees?

A: There's so much about it that will impress people. The amount of natural light in the building makes it unique. Just the expansiveness of the building, people are awestruck when they first enter the building and see just how massive it is. It's obviously impressive and it looks big from the street level, but then when you're inside and you recognize that about a third of the building is below ground, people are generally taken aback by the size of the building. It also has an incredible arrival experience. When you enter the building through either the west or east entrances, just that experience walking into how impressive the bowl is, it's awesome. From a meeting and event planner perspective, the building having the number and variety of spaces that it has will be very appealing. And my understanding is that's proven to be the case, because MSFA and SMG are already getting a lot of business booked for the various spaces. I know Mortenson will be a regular customer for events in the building.

Q: What are some of your favorite features of the stadium?

A: The ETFE roof is unique within existing stadiums in the United States. The operable doors are going to be a feature that is going to be magnificent. We've really built a lot of prototypical elements of this building, the doors being one, the retractable seating system that will allow for baseball configuration of the building is the first of its kind. So there are some features about the architecture that are impressive. Just the contrast in the openness of the concourses to the bowl as compared to the Metrodome, where you felt like you were in a tunnel when you were in the concourse going to a concession stands or



going to the restrooms, you were completely isolated from whatever event was taking place. This is very different than that because you have a sense of connection to what's going on in the bowl from wherever you are in this building.

Q: What are some things relating to the stadium's design that you wouldn't find in another stadium?

A: The building has a very contemporary design compared to the other sports facilities in the Twin Cities, although Target Field has a contemporary feel to it as well. This is even more so. It's got a little bit of an edgy look to the interiors of the building. The ETFE roof and retractable doors are features that give the building its unique characteristics. Just the volume of the space and this soaring ridge truss, and the height of the building in the west end and allowing that expansive glass and tremendous views of the downtown skyline, all of that is really going to add to the fan experience and the enjoyment of the people who are using the building.

Q: How do you think this project has benefited the local economy and community?

A: It's been a huge benefit to the local economy. Certainly for the local construction industry, it was a massive benefit at a time when it was very much needed, coming out of the Great Recession. So it's provided a great benefit in all the jobs it's created as well as the business for the hundreds of companies that have been involved in the job. And as you know, and I'm sure others like Michele [Kelm-Helgen] will speak to, it's also stimulated other significant investment in this part of town, notably, the Wells Fargo development and other hotels, housing and commercial facilities that are being planned and I'm sure will continue in the years ahead to really create a revitalization in this part of the city.

The Architect BRYAN TRUBEY

*Executive Vice President,
Director of Sports and Entertainment, HKS Architects*

Bryan Trubey, executive vice president, director of sports and entertainment at HKS Architects, is indeed an architect, as his title suggests. But when it came to planning and researching the U.S. Bank Stadium project, Trubey and his team transformed their specialty into anthropology.

Fresh off completing highly touted NFL stadiums such as Lucas Oil Stadium (2008), home of the Indianapolis Colts, and AT&T Stadium (2009), home of the Dallas Cowboys, Trubey and his team took their time researching Minneapolis' culture and roots.

"The work that we've produced or the anthropology we developed around that region was very detailed, and you see it play out in all the details in the building, but the big-picture things that really rose to the top were beliefs that were basically culturally embedded in that community based on its past and a lot of the Northern European roots," says Trubey, HKS' lead designer on the stadium project. "The two biggest values that rose to the top were craft and value."

Q: You've worked on your fair share of stadiums recently. What's different about U.S. Bank Stadium?

A: The site was absolutely spectacular in terms of what we started with. The quality of the site really speaks to the wisdom of all the players involved in making the deci-

sion there in a city, county and team standpoint, that this project would go on the existing Metrodome site, because in a lot of ways that's one of the hardest decisions to make and it has already shown to be one of the most valuable decisions yet on the project. It was challenging because they had to move the team for two seasons. That's a very hard decision to make, and the Wilfs and the whole Vikings team made a great long-term decision. The byproduct of that decision is that we spent as much time thinking about the outdoor room, which is the park in front of the stadium, as the stadium itself because in our practice and in our way of thinking, those two things working together equals a much more powerful thing than just thinking about a stadium by itself or a public park by itself.



PHOTO: TATE CARLSON

Q: Can you expand on the role this area's history and culture played into this project?

A: Even though we're very careful to say that Minneapolis is a very culturally diverse community because there are a number of different ethnic groups and belief systems that all coexist in Minneapolis, it's one of the beautiful things about that city that the Northern European roots are still one of the bigger determinants of the values. Having something that's finely crafted and beautiful but getting it at a good value—those two things really emerged as the two primary criteria we had to respond to. Other parts of the country are still building in the classical styles in terms of building a civic monument. In Minneapolis, it's just the opposite. You can think all the way back to 1945 and during that entire post-war period, it didn't matter if it was a federal courthouse or City Hall or the Guthrie Theater or the public library downtown, they are all very progressive, modern, innovative facilities. They're technically crafted very well, but they're designed in the modern style. So when we showed this to the whole client group, it really gave us the mandate to design a very progressive, modern building.

Q: What was the biggest challenge when planning and creating the new stadium?

A: The response to the environment. It's a huge creative challenge every time we do another one of these facilities to make each one look unique. One of the things we look at is climate. All of our competitors had proposed roof structures very similar to the ones that had been built on the rest of the stadiums in the country, and for us there was huge opportunity in responding and saying we developed a

roof form that likened the same roof forms of traditional structures built in this climate for thousands of years in steeply pitched single-ridge roof lines. That was quite shocking to everybody because it was so different. They loved the form and the rationale behind the form—that story became richer and richer because we were doing things essentially the same way they've been done in climates that have enormous snow loads, we were keeping the snow off the roof in a very traditional way, but the form we had created was very modern looking, so it was interpretive, not literal. And we developed a pretty unique structural system to go along with it.

Q: What are some of your favorite spaces or features of the stadium from an architectural perspective?

A: The presentation of the space when you walk in off the west end of the plaza. One of the things we've been told that is most impactful of our buildings is the transparency. People I've heard that from, especially the architectural criticism community, that's the one thing they say—it's the most un-stadiumlike of its characteristics. It's been so interesting to be part of and to see and experience firsthand. The transparency issue works a couple different ways: the visibility of the downtown skyline from inside the facility, which is a completely different thing to accomplish, a technically enclosed building compared to an open-air baseball field. This is really the first time this has ever been accomplished in a building of this scale. That visual connection between the vast majority of the built CBD and the bowl—I think that's one of my favorite sequences of spaces and what that all means visually.

Q: What are some environment-friendly features of the stadium's design?

A: From an environmental standpoint, this will be one of the most sustainable buildings of this scale anywhere in the world. We have that ventilation system that exhausts heated air in the summertime; we have the ability to use that heated air in the wintertime, and one of the reasons for it is, again, our form. If we feel like we're doing the right thing as archi-

itects, we can have a form solution for a project that has a number of different attributes to it. I went through the cultural aesthetic and functional attributes, and one of the things that the loft and the roof does for us that no other building has really done is it creates a heat reservoir that keeps the heat away from the patrons, whether it's summer or winter, because there are some times in the wintertime when we have more heat in the building than we want. So just from a sustainability standpoint, this building is really the only building of this scale that uses the natural physical properties of air buoyancy to actually make the interior of the building more comfortable. From an environmental standpoint, that's a macro issue that we really addressed that hadn't been addressed in these buildings before.

Q: How did you approach the ETFE roof and how did that come into play?

A: This is a big contributor of the sustainability program. Early on in the project, we started off with a program that was similar to other buildings: a retractable roof. We actually moved through the analysis of that pretty early on in the project and convinced the owner of the Vikings that it would be better to have a clear roof so we could feel like we're open air all the time rather than having to move a panel to feel like we're open air. Part of the rationale for that is in that climate with the snow loading and sometimes wind, we wouldn't actually be able to operate the roof all that often. So that's the reason we coined the phrase: "Clear is the new retractable." It's really an appropriate thing because in one of the harshest environments in the country for NFL football, we figured out a way to have what will seem like an open-air building.

The Manager PATRICK TALTY

General Manager, U.S. Bank Stadium

Former WWE World Champion and local college wrestling product Brock Lesnar is no longer the strongest connection between the Minnesota Vikings and the WWE.

Patrick Talty, who was hired by SMG as the general manager of U.S. Bank Stadium in January of 2015 after most recently serving as senior vice president of live events for World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. (WWE), may not have the bulging biceps, the NCAA heavyweight wrestling title for the University of Minnesota or the short-but-well-publicized stint on the Vikings defensive line, but he has the ideal career experience to give U.S. Bank Stadium the punch it needs. He knows how to manage pro sports stadiums. And he knows how to promote the sizable events that fill them.

Talty started his stadium career at the now-extinct RCA Dome in Indianapolis (1996-2001), worked for a small-market convention center and baseball stadium in Lansing, Michigan (2001-2004), helped open the University of Phoenix Stadium in Arizona (2004-2009) as assistant general manager, and even took his talents abroad as general manager of Zayed Sports City in Abu Dhabi (2009-2012), a multiveneue facility highlighted by a 45,000-seat soccer stadium. Talty helped manage the complex through a massive renovation that would allow it to host a FIFA Club World Cup.

"It went from 25 events in the year before I got there to 125 events in one year," Talty says. "We changed it from a site that looked like it was closed to it really became the central hub of Abu Dhabi, and the site has won multiple Middle East's Best Sports Complex awards. I'm very proud of that."

Q: You've had a number of different roles with different stadiums. What sets U.S. Bank Stadium apart from others you've worked on?

A: I have worked in sports facility management for most of my adult life. This is my third NFL building. This is my second opening of a stadium, but this is the first time I've been a GM of a new NFL stadium. I was the assistant GM last time when I opened up Arizona. This is my fourth opportunity to really build a team

"I want the way we run the facility and what it means to people here, I want it to equal the grandiose of the facility."

— PATRICK TALTY

from the ground up and create opportunities for excellence. Opening a stadium is very different each time because the people are different, the atmosphere is different and the work environment is different, so that's what makes it kind of different yet the same. That's also my favorite thing: You get to build a team and create a professional, hard-driven, excellent team.

Q: What's been the biggest challenge with this project?

A: That's a good question. I think maybe one of the challenges for us is this has been a facility that's been a long time coming for the community and there was a lot of positive and negative feelings about the facility, so it's a much-anticipated facility, and something that weighs on me when I think about it: I want the way we run the facility and what it means to people here, I want it to equal the grandiose of the facility; I want that to equal what people feel about it and how they treat it and what they think about it later. I really want people to be proud of this facility, even if they didn't like it back when everyone was fighting about it. I want them to be proud and excited about events. That weighs on me in terms of making sure that what we deliver is that world-class customer service and world-class events to match the stadium and the anticipation of it.

Q: What's been the most rewarding aspect of creating this new stadium?

A: By far the most rewarding aspect has been building this new SMG team, and seeing the people come together and watching them work, and building it as a really close-knit high-performance team, seeing people loving what they do and wanting to come to work. That's been for me, by far, the most rewarding thing, is seeing these people blossom and coming on and working together and enjoying themselves. That's important for me. This is an opportunity for me to create something and help create kind of a legacy in Minnesota, and one that people can be proud of. It's really rewarding to be a part of that.

Q: What are some of the things that will pleasantly surprise or greatly benefit event planners?

A: One of the things people are going to be surprised by is the technology. People expect at a convention center that the Wi-Fi is good and I think they're going to be pleasantly surprised that's going to work well in here. The club areas and the ability to have different events, I think people will be surprised by that. And I think the other thing that people will really be blown away by is the way our staff will treat our customers and our clients and our guests in a professional customer-focused way.

Q: Do you have a favorite space in the stadium?

A: My favorite club space is probably [Mystic Lake's] Club Purple; I think that's really innovative; that's the area that has an outdoor balcony that overlooks the plaza and downtown. It's a beautiful setting with a fire pit, then it's got the indoor space that overlooks the field. So it's got that indoor-outdoor feel. To me, that's really cool. Then from a football standpoint, [Mystic Lake's] Club Purple has a seating section with couches, and that's really cutting edge and cool. I haven't seen that in other stadiums and I've been around quite a few of them.

Q: What are your short-term goals for the stadium?

A: Booking-wise, we have people selling two, three, five years out; we have people always working on events. Having youth sports in the building, having running club, rollerblading, corporate events, weddings, bar mitzvahs, proms, all those different things—making sure we work really hard to get to all those different groups so they have opportunities to experience the building.

Q: What's a modern, unique feature of this stadium that sticks out to you?

A: One of the things that is somewhat modern is that we can accommodate baseball. We've done it in a way, when you're in the football setup, you won't really feel like you

could do baseball in this building. It's done in such a way that you wouldn't even notice it, and that's really cool.

Q: Any feedback you've picked up from the local meetings and events community?

A: Local meeting and event planners are very excited because they're looking for new and different meeting spaces to come

online and U.S. Bank Stadium has that. I think they're very blown away by the professionalism by our staff and service so far. It really is an opportunity for them to do different, unique events in a new space that everyone wants to be a part of, so they're very excited about it. ■

