



Busch Stadium Begins Transformation

by Brian Stull

December 15 2016 11:18 PM

The transformation of Busch Stadium is officially underway as the NHL trucks and crew arrived Thursday afternoon to begin the construction of the ice rink for the Winter Classic between the St. Louis Blues and Chicago Blackhawks on Monday, January 2nd.

“When you think about it, you’ve got concerts, soccer, now hockey, we’ve had football—the versatility of a building like this is pretty incredible,” said St. Louis Cardinals President Bill DeWitt III. “Particularly now with the way technology is and the way other markets have been able to do the same thing, there’s processes that are pretty standard now, for example bringing a rink in.”

“Why didn’t you build in the rink,” joked St. Louis Blues Chairman Tom Stillman. “It’s just a tremendous celebration of the sport of hockey and of just sports generally. It really goes beyond just one game. It’s sort of a festival of hockey and sports and the combination in this case with Cardinals baseball and bringing a city together around that.”

The framework and construction of the rink will take up the bulk of the schedule before the game but once built, there will be 20,000 gallons of water slowly misted into frozen form for the 2-inch surface to be played upon.

“We’ll be setup, hopefully, we’re spraying our first layer of water on Monday night,” shared Dan Craig, NHL Vice President of Facilities Operations. “There is still flex in the floor here with the aluminum fans that we have, so we make sure that we have a good base before we even do our white. Once we get to the white paint, the setup here will be almost identical to Scottrade Center.”

As for any fears that the grass may be damaged for baseball, the field at Busch Stadium had already been removed as the Cardinals redid some drainage for the ballpark.

“Built all the way up to the sand base, so t’s just ready for sod right now,” said DeWitt. “We’re just going to do the hockey then late February, early March we’ll put in the sod and be ready to go in April.”

Temperatures in the mid-30s with cloud cover would be ideal, but the NHL has successfully kept the ice intact for Winter Classic games in much warmer climates—due in part to the 53-foot, 300-ton capacity refrigeration unit that is parked near Gate 5 on Clark Street between Ballpark Village and Busch Stadium.

“We’ve done two games in California now,” pointed out Craig. “As a matter of fact, last year in Denver it was almost 70 degrees when we were there as well. That’s why we’ve built these trucks.”

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