

# Somerset expects to woo World Cup fans

**BY LARRY PALADINO**  
STAFF WRITER

Determined to put its best foot forward, the Somerset Collection is going all out in an effort to see that visitors to the upcoming World Cup soccer games get a kick out of the upscale shopping center in Troy.

While there has been some

skepticism about how much of an economic impact the World Cup will have at the nine venues it visits in June — including the Pontiac Silverdome — Somerset isn't about to be left second-guessing when all is said and done.

"The thing I'm afraid of is that people are not going to take this seriously," said Tom Miles, general manager of the Somerset Collection, "and on the 23rd of June, the day after it's over, they're going to say this World Cup soccer thing was great — next time it comes we'll be ready."

Plans are afoot for special Swedish and Swiss events at the Somerset Collection. On June 18, Miles said, a group from Wisconsin will perform Swedish folk dances, but there will be primarily an American flavor to the festivities, with a theme spotlighting American cars, Budweiser beer and jazz. Items Miles has been told are of considerable interest to Swedes.

It's just like going to a Michigan-Michigan State football game. People come out just because they want to be part of the excitement and energy. We want to be the best host we can be."

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime thing and it's not to be taken lightly. It's not just another marketing ploy. It's not like a Hudson's 12-hour sale. If I see it again here my hair will be either white, or gone."

Miles said the Swiss and Swedes "will have a layover here of two or three days. They'll have time to kill around the city. The Somerset Collection definitely is one of the sightseeing spots. If you're interested in commerce — to a local shopping center. If you're from out of town, there's nothing quite like this. There's no other like this in Romania and Russia and I'd say in Switzerland or Sweden, either."

On June 26, the Somerset Collection and J. Crew, the leisure wear store, will be hosts of a Swiss-themed event which also includes ethnic dancers, as well as Alpenhorns and a fashion show, plus a soccer skills demonstration. Miles said the Swiss ambassador to the United States also will be there.

Miles volunteered to help out at last year's U.S. Cup soccer tournament at the Silverdome and through that, he said, made several connections that put him in the loop for the World Cup visit. And he was elected to the board of directors of the Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau, which is coordinating many of the World Cup-related activities.

The 35-year-old Miles, an avid soccer fan, as well as a player and coach, is spearheading Somerset's efforts to woo out-of-towners, but particularly out-of-country visitors, to its stores. Especially targeted are the Swiss and Swedes, since teams from those countries will be headquartered nearby.

Four other teams from the 24-nation field — Romania, Russia,

Food and beverages will be served at both events.

Miles said he hasn't heard of any specific number of Swiss who might be attending, but has been told 1,200 Swedes have booked arrangements through travel agencies and another 6,000 independently.

"Russia and Romania aren't letting more than 600 to 700 go," he said. "And as for Brazil? It's hard to say. I've heard there'll be anywhere from 8,000 to 30,000 here."

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