

Banking their views

Oakland fans offer opinions on corporate name for new Detroit Tiger stadium

BY BARB PERT TEMPLETON
STAFF WRITER

"I'll still be the Tigers' stadium, but Comerica Park will be the official name when the new ballpark opens in 2000. Comerica, the bank, has paid \$66 million over 30 years to become Comerica, the ballpark. The stadium entrance will sport a Comerica banner flanked by two giant baseball bats.

Placing corporate names on stadiums, arenas and football bowl games for a price has become a common — and controversial — practice. Nationwide, 48 teams have sold such rights, according to a published report.

And you can, ah, bank on Oakland County residents to deposit their opinions on the naming of Comerica Park in Detroit.

"I feel like the Tigers sold out especially since they are only getting one million a year from Comerica," said Ron Hall, who works in Bloomfield Hills. "That's not that much money. What can they get for that, a starting pitcher?"

However, not everyone was negative about the change. "Everybody else in the world is doing it, and with the amount of money the players are getting the owners gotta make a buck," said Joe Machiorlatti, owner of Mr. Joe's, a sports bar in Southfield.

But having the Comerica name splashed around the Tigers' new stomping grounds isn't going to prevent Ron Hall to dash to the bank to make a deposit.

'Suro, Tiger Stadium would have been cooler, but what can you do? It's \$66 million dollars, so I don't blame them.'

Mike Schumacher
—J&M Sports, Oxford

"Just having their name on there isn't going to make me run right over there and be a customer, so I don't think it was worth it," he said.

Mike Schumacher at J&M Sports in Oxford said he couldn't fault the Tiger owner for going with the money.

"Sure, Tiger Stadium would have been cooler, but what can you do? It's \$66 million dollars, so I don't blame them," Schumacher said.

"It's no big deal really, it's just a sign of the times," he said.

The move is a good one from an advertising standpoint, according to David Kiley, senior vice president of marketing and communications at Donor, a Southfield based advertising agency.

"This will be good for Comerica because it's to be quite a place and a big step up in comfort and amenities at the stadium," Kiley said.

"And yes, I think it cuts both ways because they will get brand awareness when the

games are broadcast as 'the brand new Comerica Park,' but baseball fans will resent the fact that it's not Tiger Stadium anymore," Kiley added.

Resentful fans are in the majority on the staff at Play It Again Sports in Orchard Lake. The crew gave a serious thumbs down to the Comerica Park moniker. Manager Ray Dybowski offered his opinion by phone.

"It's horrible. It's one of those dumb corporate names that doesn't fit at all," Dybowski said. "It should have stayed Tiger Stadium." On the other hand, the managers at Dunham's Sporting Goods in Rochester Hills don't have a problem with the stadium's new name. Manager Brian Lowe doesn't care what the park's called as long as his wallet isn't in peril.

"I think change is good as long as it doesn't boost the ticket prices," Lowe said. "It'll be good to start a new tradition."

"It's going to give us a better stadium and a better time at the games, so that's fine with me," said Austin Young, another Dunham's manager, referring to the funding from Comerica. "All the big companies have the stadiums now anyway, that's how they can get the new ones started."

Despite those upbeat sentiments, die hard fans will still long for the Tiger Stadium of old.

"It'll always be Tiger Stadium to me," offered Dybowski.

"And it could be worse," said Hall. "It could be Little Caesar's Stadium."

West Bloomfield resident among several appointees

Gov. John Engler has appointed these people to state boards:

Michael L. Stacey of West Bloomfield to the Michigan Gaming Control Board. A retired Wayne County circuit judge, Stacey will represent the general public on the board that oversees the licensing and control of casino gaming operations, manufacturers of gaming devices and gaming employees. His term expires Dec. 20, 2002.

Michael G. Maxfield of Birmingham to the Local Government Claims Review Board. The board decides disputed claims involving state disbursements to local governments. Maxfield is president of Enterprise Capital, an investment banking firm specializing in real estate. He earned bachelor of science and master of business administration degrees from Michigan State University. His term expires March 26, 2001.

Ann Marie Shoop of Novi to the Commission on Services to the Aging, which advises the state on policies and programs for the elderly. Shoop is a registered nurse for geriatric health care at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor. Her term runs until July 28, 2001.

In major administrative changes, Engler appointed: **Frank Fitzgerald**, retiring state representative from Grand Ledge, as state insurance commissioner within the

Department of Consumer and Industry Services effective Jan. 1. A 12-year legislative veteran, Fitzgerald was terminated this year. He served on the House Insurance Committee eight years and chaired the House Republican Policy Committee on campaign finance reform, traffic safety and drugs. He replaces the retiring E.L. Cox, former CEO of Michigan Mutual/Amerisure insurance companies. Fitzgerald had been an early candidate for attorney general but dropped out at Engler's request.

Mark Murray as state treasurer replacing Doug Roberts, who left to enter private business after 26 years in state government, including deputy budget director in the Milliken years. Murray was state budget director until 1997, when he left to take a vice presidency at Michigan State University.

Bill Martin as director of the Department of Corrections, which runs the 46,700-inmate prison system and parole program. Martin is a former state police officer, served five terms in the House of Representatives from a Battle Creek district, and has been lottery commissioner for four years. Engler credited Martin with increasing lottery revenues from \$510 million in 1994 to \$616 million in 1998. He takes over Jan. 15 replacing Ken McGinnis, who left to enter private business.

Kelley exits with flurry of opinions

BY TIM RICHARD
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Attorney General Frank Kelley left office with a series of legal opinions allowing use of social security numbers in county mental health reports and striking down some restrictions on political contributions by casino interests.

An attorney general's opinion, usually written at the request of a legislator or other public official, has the force of law until a court rules otherwise.

SS numbers OK

Federal law doesn't prohibit a county community mental health agency from using a recipient's social security number in reports to the state Department of Community Health, Kelley ruled.

"The disclosure and use of social security numbers are mandated" by the U.S. Public Health and Welfare Act "in certain specified situations," he said.

"Specifically, the federal law requires the state to have in effect an income and eligibility verification system that determines a person's eligibility for specified federal benefits."

Social security numbers are

used only for reporting "demographic and service information" — and not names — to the state Department of Community Health. Using the social security number allows the county to share information with the state "without disclosing the identity of the recipient," Kelley said.

His Dec. 16 opinion was requested by Rep. Sharon Gire, D-Macomb County.

Casino gifts

Kelley's Dec. 17 opinion struck down portions of the 1996 gambling law restricting contributions to political candidates. Voters adopted the law as Proposal E on Nov. 5, 1996, but the Legislature amended it to limit contributions by casino interests.

To a series of questions posed by House Speaker Curtis Hertel, D-Detroit about the Gaming Control Act, Kelley said it's unconstitutional:

■ To prohibit political contributions by a spouse, parent, child of a licensee or a person with a casino interest. Such a restriction violates free speech as protected by the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

■ To prohibit supplier licensees to contribute political

candidates for one year prior to applying for a license. "They do restrict political expression in violation of the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution and are, therefore, unconstitutional."

But Kelley said other parts of the law pass constitutional muster:

■ Casino and supplier licensees may make political contributions prior to the effective date of the act. The law doesn't prohibit such gifts and therefore doesn't violate the U.S. Constitution's prohibition against ex post facto laws (an act that makes punishable that which wasn't punishable before the law was passed).

■ It's all right to restrict political contributions by licensees and casino interests. It is in the state interest to "deter corruption in the casino-related political process."

Kelley added that if a law is adopted by the people in an initiative (such as Proposal E), any amendments to the amendments, may be adopted only by a three-fourths vote of each member of the Legislature.

Kelley noted that the restrictions on campaign contributions by licensees and their relatives

were added by the Legislature in 1997 and weren't part of the original Proposal E.

Transit boards

A city council member may not serve on the board of a public transportation authority, Kelley ruled in a question raised by Jackson County Prosecutor John McBain.

In the city of Jackson case, elected council members removed two members of the transit board, indicating the city had a supervisory relationship.

For a council member also to serve on a transit board supervised by the council violated the Incompatible Public Offices Act, Kelley said.

The public transportation board attempted to dissolve itself. But Kelley said it lacked authority to do so. A municipal corporation created by the Legislature may only be dissolved by legislative consent, said Kelley, citing an 1897 state Supreme Court decision.

Kelley left office Dec. 31 after 37 years. He did not seek reelection.

Sources: AGO 7001, 7002 and 7003.

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