

8 things to know about the proposed Museum of Sports in Philadelphia

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The nonprofit organization behind a proposed \$7.5 million Museum of Sports at the South Philadelphia sports complex is hosting a public fundraising event for the project June 15 in Newtown, Pa.. Here are eight things to know about the proposed museum.

The idea for the museum goes back six years.

Lou Scheinfeld, who has worked as an executive with the Philadelphia Eagles, 76ers, Flyers and Comcast-Spectacor, got the inspiration for the proposed museum after noticing a void. He said while many smaller sports museums exist for individual teams or individual sports, there was nothing that encompassed all sports and showcased Philadelphia's rich sports history. "I thought why don't we create something that pulls everything together, and we can put it down at the sports complex," said Scheinfeld, who is serving as the president of the Museum of Sports organization. "We are one of only a few cities that has teams in all four professional sports that play with the city's borders, and we have them all in one corner."



The project has attracted some big name supporters.

Scheinfeld once took the idea to Ed Snider, the founder and former chairman of the Philadelphia Flyers and Comcast-Spectacor who died last year following a bout with cancer. "He loved the idea," Scheinfeld said. He also discussed the idea with Lewis Katz — the Camden born businessman, philanthropist, and former co-owner of the Philadelphia Inquirer who died in a plane crash in 2014, as well as with former Philadelphia mayor and Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell. They both also loved the idea. "Ed is still 100 percent behind it," Scheinfeld said.

The address for the proposed museum has changed.

"We originally envisioned this as a \$20 million stand-alone building that would be built next to [Xfinity Live!]," Scheinfeld said. Instead the new location is 25,000 square feet of space within the Jetro Building next to Lincoln Financial Field, which will cut the projects start-up costs to \$7.5 million and give the museum visibility from I-95 and Pattison Avenue. Using available space will also shorten the projected opening of the museum from 2.5 years to 18 months. "We are in discussions now about a 20-year lease," Scheinfeld said, adding they have retained Philadelphia architectural firm Ewing Cole — which designed Citizens Bank Park — to design the museum. "We could be open at the end of 2018 or by early 2019."

The bulk of the memorabilia that will be on display is being loaned to the museum by a South Jersey cardiologist.

Dr. Nicholas DePace has agreed to exhibit his vast collection of sports memorabilia at the museum. DePace focuses on one-of-a-kind items, and uniforms and equipment used in actual games. DePace has most of his items in his home, but some are on display at a small nonprofit sports library and museum he created in Haddonfield, N.J. Among the items in his collection are:

- A rare Babe Ruth uniform shirt valued at \$6 million,
- A Ty Cobb shirt valued at \$3.1 million,
- A 1910 Honus Wagner baseball card,
- Wilt Chamberlain's last game-used jersey he wore with the Philadelphia 76ers, and
- Joe Frazier's robe and trunks worn in his 1971 fight against Muhammed Ali

The museum will also feature boxing memorabilia from the collections of local boxing promoters J. Russell Pelts and Joe Hand.

Scheinfeld said while the museum will have an emphasis on Philadelphia's professional and college sports teams and athletes born here, it will go beyond the city's borders. His hope is to feature traveling displays of sports memorabilia made available from places like the Smithsonian Institute and professional sports halls of fame. The plan is to continually rotate items. "When the Red Sox come to Citizens Bank Park, we could set up a display featuring Ted Williams," he said.

The museum will be much more than just sports artifacts.

"You can just have an old cleats and uniforms," Scheinfeld said. "Kids would want to leave after 10 minutes." The Philadelphia Museum of Sports will be much more interactive, he said, with virtual reality elements, video monitors, an arcade, educational exhibits and displays that connect with tablets and smartphones.

Ideas for virtual reality experiences include simulations of riding a bike up the Manayunk wall, rowing a boat in the Dad Vail Regatta, and even racing a car in the Indy 500. Other plans call for a rooftop miniature golf course, featuring obstacles in the form of old sports venues. A movie theater, showing sports films, will have seats from old stadiums and arenas. Scheinfeld said he also wants the museum to host special events such as athlete book signings and sports award ceremonies to help bring in crowds.

"We want this to be for the fans, a way to give the fans their own chunk of the sports complex," said Rick Berger, *(at right, with Lou)* who is director of development for the project. "We plan to do a lot of grassroots fund raising."



The fund raising is already underway.

Scheinfeld said they have raised \$2 million for the museum, half of which came from one donor who requested anonymity. He said they are also talking with potential corporate sponsors and — given that the museum will operate as a nonprofit organization with a lean budget — would entertain the idea of selling the naming rights for the museum if the price was right.

The main sources of revenue for the museum are expected to be ticket sales, donations and sponsorship, and rental fees generated by making the museum available for corporate meetings and other events.

The June 15 public fund raising event will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. at The Green Parrot in Newtown, Bucks County. The event will feature opportunities to meet Eagles first round draft pick Derek Barnett and Former Philadelphia Flyer Brian Propp. Tickets are \$100, which includes food and an open bar. People wishing to make donations can find information at themuseumofsports.org.

The museum project may bring Pat Croce back to town.

Berger said they have had conversations with Croce, the one-time physical therapist who became president and minority owner of the Philadelphia 76ers before opening a pirate-themed museum and a chain of bars and restaurants in and around the Florida Keys. Berger said Croce is considering opening one of his restaurants at the museum.

This is all about preserving memories and legacies.

"There are people my age who ask who Bobby Clarke was or who Dr. J was," said Berger, a 37-year-old Eagles season ticket holder. "Soon people will be asking the same questions about [Allen Iverson](#) and [Donovan McNabb](#). It's sad there is no home for all these memories, especially in a city like Philadelphia where the sports fans are so passionate."

Scheinfeld said they want to have a place in the museum for a special tribute to the "four fathers of Philadelphia sports" — [Ed Snider](#) for hockey, [Connie Mack](#) for baseball, [Bert Bell](#) for football and [Eddie Gottlieb](#) for basketball. "We want to tell their stories about how they got started in sports," he said.

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