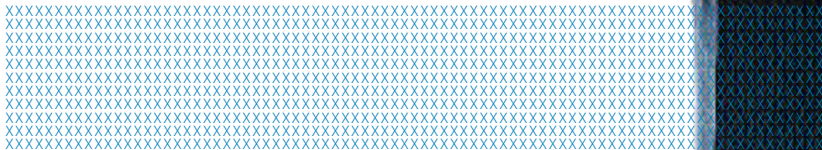


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5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MAKING HOCKEY ICE



BY DAN CRAIG, NHL FACILITIES OPERATIONS MANAGER
(AS TOLD TO NEIL JANOWITZ)
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF SCIORTINO
ON DAN: DRESS SHIRT BY PERRY ELLIS PORTFOLIO;
SLACKS BY HAGGAR



1. I LEAD THE LEAGUE IN ICE TIME

"I'm based in New York but spend most of my time on the road. Back when I was facilities manager in Edmonton, it was just me and my crew, but now all kinds of organizations have me on speed dial. They call me in to consult on ice conditions, dehumidification, nets, almost anything you'd find in an arena."

2. WE HAVE TARGETS.

"We aim for an air temperature between 60° and 64° with 44% humidity, and an ice-surface temperature of 22°. Of course, if it's 86° outside with, say, 66% humidity, it's a bit trickier to balance. We run two air processors to control the temperature and humidity and add a third if needed. But for big games, we set the temperature lower, 58°, because with 16,000 intense fans inside, it's 62° soon enough. The outdoor game at Wrigley is a different deal entirely. I hired a well-rounded team of NHL facilities managers to help me out on that."

3. IT'S NOT THE HEAT.

"In spite of what people say, ice quality doesn't vary much between rinks. We make sure of that. And warmer cities aren't harder to manage. Really, it's often the opposite. In a place like Phoenix, the temperature stays pretty constant, but in Buffalo or Ottawa it can change a fair amount on any given day. So I don't watch the news in the morning; I watch the Weather Channel."

4. WE MUST PREPARE THIS HOUSE.

"Beneath any indoor-rink floor is a sub-base, then a thin heating layer to prevent frost from ruining the foundation. Above that lies eight inches of sand, and then concrete that holds the pipes for the refrigeration liquids. Most NHL arenas make at least two ice sheets each season. We can do one in as few as 32 hours, but a really good inch-thick surface takes 48. We build the ice with thin sprays of water. That's more efficient than waiting for a lake to freeze. Plus, it offers better density."

5. I'M NOT MELTING AWAY.

"We're always looking for cleaner ways to operate. A new system we have cools arenas using a fraction of the time and energy of old methods. But polymer-based fake ice isn't about to replace the real stuff. It's great for training, but the texture isn't fit for the speed of our game. I don't see that changing—at least not before I retire."

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