

City of Orlando the Magic Contract and Al Davis' Desires

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
April 20, 1994

Is there a sinister force stalking Orlando? Are the taxpayers of the city about to be relieved of some of their excess cash? Are the citizens of Orlando ready to turn over \$30M to \$40M to Al Davis along with a piece of real estate, and another \$4M to the DeVos clan? These indeed are worthy charities, and the people of Orlando through their representatives should support these charitable enterprises. Orlando has long been noted for its support of public welfare for the worthy, the oppressed and the downtrodden.

If there is any doubt about Orlando's largesse one need only look at the hefty subsidization of the Orlando Magic by the city of Orlando. The contract that Pat Williams cut with generous city officials was a model of Christian charity.

The Magic will never be seen darkening the offices of public welfare agencies. They get their office suite in the Arena, fifty percent of the concession take, and a minimal facility rental of \$9000 per game, up \$2000 from the previous discount rate. \$9000 still represents a steal as well as a guarantee of massive profit for the team.

And now as mentioned here several weeks ago the Magic are putting the city on notice that they need more seats, for more revenue. The cash cow must be fattened, and preferably at the expense of the people of the city, not at the expense of the Magic franchise which has increased in value by \$9M in the three years of DeVos ownership, a true charity case.

Seats will be added by cutting two inches off the size of the 21 inch seats. Those who must go from 21 inch to 19 inch seats will be carefully selected by computer to make sure they have the proper girth for the change. If in fact the Magic were to add, say another 5,000 seats, and cut off say an additional six inches, the whole season ticket holding contingent could be enrolled in the Pat Williams Pray Your Weight Away Program so they would fit into the trim-line seats. This would enhance the look of the crowd, as if by Magic, and further fatten the coffers of Rich DeVos. No doubt The Orlando Sentinel would look on the bright side and point out how much healthier a community the DeVos family has made the city beautiful.

If the Arena is to be expanded by 2000 seats at a cost of nearly \$4M to the city, then it is time for the city to get fair market value on the rental, and redo the split on concessions. And

before any of this is done it is imperative that some guarantees be had about the future. Magic officials have already conceded that this expansion is not a long term solution, but only a stop gap measure. That means only one thing. Demands will be coming shortly for a new arena, seating over 20,000, which will make the O-rena obsolete.

But all of this is merely peanuts because the master fleecer is heading our way. Al "Don't Call Me Sinista" Davis has brought his act to the City Beautiful. Yes, for a mere \$30M to \$40M for Citrus Bowl renovations, and an additional \$50M transfer fee, Al Davis will be happy to bring the Raiders to your city, unless of course he gets a better offer somewhere else.

Isn't this exciting. The Oakland, Los Angeles, Irwindale, Long Beach, Baltimore, St. Louis, Memphis, San Antonio, Raiders could become the Orlando Raiders. Years ago a friend of mine and myself started referring to them as the Al Davis, or AD Raiders, so that we would not have to be continuously learning a new name.

Al Davis is the master dangler, waving his lucrative franchise before anyone who expresses even the slightest interest. This is the guy who abandoned Oakland after repeated sellouts, to go to LA for the big skybox and pay per view money, who now is ready to head out of town because the LA Coliseum has been damaged by the earthquake and needs a minimum of \$30M in repairs, and the pay per view payoff hasn't panned out. Davis is a man of principle, who lives by the principle of loyalty to the highest bidder at any given moment.

The City of Orlando has indicated it will not pay a \$50M transfer fee, but is willing to offer Al a 99 year lease on 10 acres of real estate in the Citrus Bowl area for a dollar a year, on which Al could build a luxury hotel or anything else he wants. Isn't that nice. Al will likely find this offer interesting, but the bidding has just begun, and it will go much higher than this.

It is unfortunate that the City of Orlando did not stay out of this cheap and tacky show. Al Davis is pimping for his Raiders and he appears to have found a John on the mean streets of Orlando in City Hall. Simply put, dealing with Al Davis is too high a price to pay for an NFL franchise regardless of the final figures. Anyone who thinks that Davis has anything other than a pecuniary interest in Orlando, just hasn't been paying attention.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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