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Portable suites to make appearance at beach volleyball event

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**BREAKING
GROUND**
DON MURET

Officials running the Asics World Series of Beach Volleyball are upgrading this year's event to showcase a new portable suite product on wheels.

The **VIPortable Suite System**, produced by New York vendor **Seating Solutions**, is a three-level structure built on top of 16 aircraft tires. Each suite can fit up to 40 patrons for a premium experience at sports and entertainment events. At full capacity, the structure weighs 50,000 pounds.

The units' interior spaces have air conditioning and heating systems, and are equipped with leather chairs and bar stools, refrigerators, minibars and computer hookups. The three outdoor viewing decks have drink rails attached. The second-floor balcony has an all-weather television. Stairways provide access to all three levels.

Dave Klewan, general manager of **Management Plus Enterprises**, the company that owns the beach volleyball property, plans to set up four of the portable structures at this year's event in Long Beach. Dates are Aug. 18-23.

As part of the temporary venue, the four suites will be placed behind one endline of the beach court with their backs to the ocean, facing a concert stage behind the opposite endline. The rental costs are in the mid-five figures, covering transportation, installation and removal for all four units, Klewan said.

His firm is splitting the inventory into three-day, 20-person packages selling for \$12,000 a suite. There will be two groups per suite. The cost covers preferred parking, merchandise and non-alcoholic drinks. Catering, including alcohol, is a separate fee.

Klewan first saw the portable suites in operation at the iHeartRadio Music Festival in September outside the **MGM Grand** in Las Vegas. MGM, a sponsor of the World Series of Beach Volleyball, invited him to the festival, and Klewan thought the structures would be a good fit to boost the premium experience for corporate customers.

The 2015 event is the third production for the beach volleyball group, and Klewan said the suites are the final step for developing a first-class event that last year drew about 50,000 attendees and 23 million viewers on NBC. This year's event serves as a qualifier for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

The key to the VIPortable Suite is its flexibility for relocation during events if necessary, said **Scott Suprina**, owner of Seating Solutions. Other companies make portable suites in sports, but most of those units are stuck in one place for the duration of the event.

Seating Solutions, by comparison, developed a model that enables several units to be pushed by forklift to a different location within an hour, which was the case at the iHeartRadio event and its multiple stages, Suprina said.

The product presents a lower-cost option for teams and schools that can't afford to spend millions of dollars to build permanent suites, said **Daren Libonati**, a Las Vegas promoter involved with the iHeartRadio fest and former executive director of **Thomas & Mack Center** and **Sam Boyd Stadium**.

"As an operator you're always looking to grow revenue, and this helps you create a VIP experience for a lot less money than reconstructing a stadium," Libonati said.

> **VIKING WEATHER:** Three years after inhabiting one of the hottest places on the planet, **Patrick Talty** settles in on the other side of the spectrum as **SMG's** new general manager of the Minnesota Vikings' new stadium under construction.

From 2009 to 2012, Talty ran **Zayed Sports City** in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, a sports complex in the heart of the Arabian desert. He then spent



Portable suites in use at the iHeartRadio Music fest in Vegas
Photo by: COURTESY OF SEATING SOLUTIONS

two years with **World Wrestling Entertainment** as senior vice president of live events before accepting his new position in Minneapolis, one of the U.S.'s coldest markets.

"As my wife joked, we're prone to extreme weather," Talty said.

Talty's NFL experience covers five years as assistant general manager at **University of Phoenix Stadium**, site of this year's Super Bowl. He started in the business in 1996 as an event coordinator at the old RCA Dome, former home of the Indianapolis Colts. The Vikings' stadium opens next year.

> **CHEESY:** For the record, **AECOM's Jon Niemuth** hails from Oshkosh, Wis., not Appleton, as stated in this column three weeks ago.

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