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Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

JETCETERA: MTS Centre amps up volume for Jets games

By: **Geoff Kirbyson**

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True North's Kevin Donnelly explains a few of the changes fans will notice at Jets games this season. (BORIS MINKEVICH / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

If you thought it was loud at Winnipeg Jets games last year, you ain't heard nothing yet.

The MTS Centre has just installed a state-of-the-art sound system expected to make the home of the Jets even less hospitable to visiting teams.

Kevin Donnelly, general manager and vice-president with True North Sports & Entertainment, said six giant speakers have been installed above the scoreboard which will ensure every possible sound reaches every eardrum with the utmost clarity and maximum volume.

"We're going to set it at 11 and see what the reaction is," Donnelly said.

He said the previous sound system was fine for the 7,000 or 8,000 fans who regularly turned out for Manitoba Moose

games but the clarity suffered when the volume was turned up with a full house of 15,003.

On the flip side, when the sound was crystal-clear, it was too quiet for some fans to hear.

Perhaps most importantly, True North has heard fans' complaints about the bladder-splitting lineups for washrooms, particularly between periods. (No, the trough is not making a comeback.) Not only has it boosted the urinal count in the main concourse by 21 per cent, it has also opened up a previously closed-off corridor and stairwell to direct fans down to the event level, or basement. Unbeknownst to most fans, that's where the largest men's and women's washrooms in the building are found. He hopes to pull between 100 and 500 people downstairs between periods.

Subway joins the food and beverage offering at the MTS Centre, too. It recently opened a new outlet in the main concourse that has a traditional made-to-order counter as well as a "grab-and-go" side. Subway kiosks will also be set up in the concourse of the 300 level.

One change fans won't get a chance to see, but which should result in happier hockey players, is the addition of a "family room" behind security at the event level. The parents, wives and children of the players can watch the game there, have a drink and a snack and meet up with them after the final buzzer has sounded.

The budget for all the pre-season changes is into seven figures, but it was nearly \$10 million last year. Donnelly said reinvestment in the building will be a regular occurrence.

"It's a long-term plan to stay vital, current and polished," he said.

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HISTORY

Updated on Friday, January 18, 2013 at 9:40 AM CST: replaces photo



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