

GA for Whitecaps FC games

Business Proposal

Summary

Two of the supporter groups of the Vancouver Whitecaps Football Club, namely the Vancouver Southsiders and the Curva Collective, have joined forces to present two approaches for moving towards establishing General Admission supporters section(s) at BC Place for Vancouver Whitecaps FC games.

Our **objectives**:

- enhance supporters culture in Vancouver and BC;
- establish the long-term sustainability of VWFC support;
- resolve legacy seating issues;
- provide a way for VWFC to increase the number of actual bums in seats;
- increase game day revenue;
- enhance the level of buy-in to the game day experience and solidify long-term customers;
- continue to enhance the best sporting atmosphere in Vancouver.

To achieve these objectives our **recommendation** is to implement the following changes*:

- Turn all seats between entry 251 and entry 204 - White - into General Admission sections. Make these the lowest cost tickets after Teal. Allow direct supporters group single game ticket sales to avoid Ticketmaster fees for supporters.
- Make Teal sections more explicitly "Family Sections" with an emphasis of encouraging a children friendly environment. These sections should be priced accordingly (i.e. be the cheapest) to encourage families to locate there. This aligns with the reduced atmosphere and worst sight lines (direct sun depending on kick-off time and weather) that these sections have.
- Adjust pricing of the Green sections over the next two seasons to reflect their true worth. First, match White prices in 2018. Next, set the price between White and Yellow starting in 2019. This removes the anomaly where people who sit next to each other are paying either \$490.77 or \$735.11 for essentially the same experience. This will also enhance the value proposition for the Teal sections.

Both the Vancouver Southsiders and Curva Collective fully commit their resources and will work closely with the Whitecaps Front Office working out a joint communication and action plan and execute on it in preparation for the 2018 season going forward.

See Appendix I for information on general admission examples*

Details

FINANCIAL BENEFITS*

	Proposal	No change	Extra revenue
2017 season	\$2,542,348.20	\$2,542,348.20	\$0.00
2018 season	\$2,699,530.90	\$2,593,195.16	\$106,335.73
2019 season	\$2,906,853.85	\$2,645,059.07	\$261,794.78

See Appendix II for details on how this table was calculated*

Supporters Groups also benefit from single game ticket sales and by providing minimal overhead supporters and fans also benefit with no downside for the Club.

OTHER BENEFITS

Solves seating and pricing legacy issues once and for all and resolves the green section anomaly. Higher revenue due to Green re-pricing, increased demand for GA and Family Sections and likelihood of higher Season Ticket (ST) retention rates.

Happier core customers.

Huge move to support existing Supporters Groups.

No need to relocate anyone in White unless they desire to be moved. If they do want to move this provides an opportunity to either up sell to Green or relocate to more appropriate seats in Teal and energize the ST base in those sections.

A whole White GA enables supporters to stand with friends, family and like minded fellow supporters. This encourages bonds between supporters and in turn encourages stickiness of customers and higher ST retention rates. It also encourages new customers who may be attending in groups and who were historically put off by not being able to sit together or unable to join their STH supporter friends.

Looking into the future this solution will also enable future generations of soccer supporters to organise their own groups if any of the existing SGs not provide the experiences they seek - or the unlikely event of dissolution of groups - thus securing the future of football support and supporter culture in Vancouver.

CONSIDERATIONS

Possibility of short term disenchantment for some ST customers.

Hard to politically admit initial MLS ticketing strategy was flawed.

Reduced availability of affordable supporters seats.

Alternative solution

Only to be considered if public opinion is overwhelmingly negative towards GA in supporter sections.

The alternative is to turn the block of seats between entry #253 and entry #254 into a controlled GA section. The aim here is to provide a unified supporter section, priced accordingly that would provide a test bed for GA in BC Place. Move in rate and buy-in will be low unless financial incentives are provided for both supporters moving in and moving out. These section(s) would be controlled by Supporters Groups. Space opened up in other White sections by this move will allow easy relocation of those presently seated in that block who are not members of SGs.

BENEFITS

Does not require much work to accomplish.

Creates less turmoil.

Achieves a GA section with limited disruption.

If SGs have control of the section(s) it would support their ability to increase their numbers, and by extension, the match day atmosphere..

Provides a unified supporter section.

Gives Vancouver customers a taste of the excellent #CapsOnTour experience in Seattle and Portland

Serves as a test run for the Club and stadium before potentially expanding GA in the future.

Opens up space in White and Green to relocate people from the new GA section.

CONSIDERATIONS

Provides much smaller - if any - financial upside for the club.

Only partially solves legacy issues with pricing and seating.

Potential for future turmoil if decision is made to expand GA. ST holders will have even more time to become accustomed to their seats.

Creates the same issues that Seattle Sounders are now having difficulty resolving regarding expanding the GA section with demand.

Restricts the future size and deployment of any large scale tifo.

This will cause some people to be happy whilst making no-one truly happy.

APPENDIX I. - General Admission examples

WHITECAPS 2

The Whitecaps FC 2 team have successfully implemented GA at both UBC and Langley home games. The setup benefited all fans, including families, casual fans, supporters. The club also benefited of the limited resources needed to host these games.

CASCADIA

Portland - the Timbers Army successfully operates GA 2x8 sections in the north end of Providence Park. It helped them establish and nurture supporters culture and are fairly labeled as soccer city USA. SG volunteers are ensuring ticket validity for the area at the entry points. Volunteer blocks, bracelets, the 1 scarf 1 seat rule keeps gate-open-time entry smooth and fair. (overnight lineups are not necessary, they are in fact illegal according to city bylaws)

Seattle - The ECS operates large sections in the south end of CenturyLink field and it has helped them establish and nurture their style of supporters culture.

Both Cascadia rivals outshine the “best sporting atmosphere” of Vancouver. One major factor is GA in those stadiums. Conversely, Vancouver SGs have limited opportunities for natural growth due to the very limited relocation opportunities provided before and during the season.

AROUND THE LEAGUE

The following MLS teams have GA for one or many of their supporters groups:

- New York Red Bulls - each group has their GA blocks in their respective sections
- San Jose Earthquakes - The SJ Ultras enjoy rather oversized GA section(s) for their style of support
- LA Galaxy - The Angel City Brigade have GA seating in two (or more) sections behind the net. Smaller group have their blocks in different spots around the stadium.
- Real Salt Lake - Each smaller group controls blocks or whole sections with GA seating.
- Sporting Kansas City - Cauldron end GA
- Colorado Rapids - C38 have GA seating in the section they control ticketing for - recently moved unsure of size
- Chicago Fire - Section 8 has GA seating
- DC United - each group with one or more sections
- Orlando City - safe standing GA section for supporters
- Minnesota United - Dark Clouds have GA seating
- Atlanta United - Terminus Legion (and other groups) have GA supporters section(s)
- Philadelphia Union - Sons of Ben - GA seating in whole supporters end

- Toronto FC - Each group has blocks or sections of GA seating
- Whitecaps FC - Only away travellers are provided a GA block of seats regardless of size

BC PLACE

Over the past two years the rugby sevens weekends underline the possibility and the effectiveness of providing GA for large crowds at BC Place. Allows for flexible sized or ad hoc group of friends to enjoy their sporting event together, reduces usher needs. Despite vast amount of available seating upstairs, the lower bowl only had noticeable empty patches of seats in the assigned seat sections.

APPENDIX II. - Facts & assumptions

- Green seats in supporters end: 1633 (216+401+243+243+362+168)
- White seats in supporters end: 3139 (284+497+523+291+282+507+491+264)
- 2017 season prices
 - Green seats STH price \$490.77 (with 12% discount \$439.28)
 - White seats STH price \$554.61 (with 12% discount \$495.52)
 - Yellow seats STH price \$735.11 (with 12% discount \$654.36)
- Ticket price increase of 2% year over year to account for inflation (included in all calculations)
- 2018 season proposed prices
 - White \$565.70
 - Green \$565.70
 - Yellow \$749.81
- 2019 season proposed prices
 - White \$577.02
 - Green \$670.91
 - Yellow \$764.81
- 12% discount is not used in calculations
 - Early and guaranteed revenue provides stability and reduce planning budget risks.
 - Lower revenue balanced by higher single ticket prices.