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## 2017 NHL Winter Classic

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**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL: ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY AND HEALTH SCIENCES**

**2017 NHL Winter Classic**

**A GRADUATE PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts Degree in Sport Management**

**by  
Melissa Dalum  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
June, 2016**



## Dedication

I would like to take this opportunity to dedicate this thesis to my hockey-loving husband, who always showed genuine intrigue by the research, facts, and conversations during the compilation of the detailed execution my thesis subject.

## Abstract

This thesis paper examined one of the National Hockey League's (NHL) premier events, the Winter Classic, in preparation of their 2017 game. In an effort to set guidelines and objectives in pursuit of growing the NHL brand, this comprehensive report reviewed the detailed positioning of this product extension through the marketing of nostalgic memories of early hockey traditions. Taking place in Minneapolis, MN, the Winter Classic is a regular season hockey game played in an open-air stadium on New Year's Day. The uniqueness of this event is developed herein through an examination of the marketing mix to help define its strategic marketing plan. This event proposal further outlined effective management skills and techniques necessary for this event to be successful. This included a prioritized duty of a thorough and itemized risk management plan, and an ethical analysis of the image this event is portraying to the greater sports community. Finally, implementation and evaluation of the core event was defined for simplified execution and reproduction.

*Keywords: NHL, winter classic, hockey, nostalgia, Minnesota, sporting event*

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## Chapter One: Organization Introduction

The National Hockey League (NHL) is a professional ice hockey league overseeing franchised club members located within established territories of the United States and Canada. Formed in 1917 with four Canadian teams, today the NHL consists of 30 teams within two geographic divisions (NHL, n.d.; Marsh, 2015) with plans of expansion. The NHL conveys a tall internal league structure with horizontal differentiations of functional club hierarchies (Jones, 2013). Led by Gary Bettman, Commissioner of the NHL since the title was adopted in 1993, the NHL is a not-for-profit organization responsible for upholding and enacting the NHL Constitution, a governing document overseeing operations as agreed upon by the members of the league (Constitution, n.d.).

The NHL has defined their purpose through objectives in their Constitution as follows:

(a) To perpetuate hockey as one of the national games of the United States and Canada....(e) The education of the public, through advertising, radio and other media, to the end that professional hockey, as played according to the standards of the League, may gain popular support and acceptance as a wholesome entertainment. (f) The development of youth in mind and body and the teaching of fair play and good sportsmanship through the media of hockey. (Constitution, n.d., p.1)

The NHL's creed emphasizes the greater platform both heritage has on this sport and event indicating, "we are the proud stewards of a 90 plus year heritage on ice;" and "this is a league with a respect of the past that propels us into great future" (Gatehouse, 2012, p. 208). These statements express an important relationship the NHL has with its community and fans.

Tasked with growing the sport of hockey and brand for its members, the NHL works to uphold league standards, limitations, and expectations of its member clubs, negotiates collective

bargaining agreements with the NHL Players' Association, and negotiates overarching league marketing and advertisement strategies. This can include televised broadcasting rights, league-level sponsorships, merchandising rights, and special events while adhering to the objectives of their constitution. This thesis paper examines one of the NHL's premier events, the Winter Classic, in preparation of their 2017 event in an effort to set guidelines and objectives in pursuit of growing the NHL brand.

## **Chapter Two: Event Introduction**

The 2017 National Hockey League (NHL) Winter Classic is an outdoor professional hockey game played on New Years Day in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This event pits division rivals, the Chicago Blackhawks, and the home team, Minnesota Wild, against the elements of a cold Minnesota winter. In preparation, a comprehensive analysis is needed to ensure feasibility, effective execution, and continuity in pursuit of a successful event. This is accomplished herein by analyzing the associated organizations and prior Winter Classic history, evaluating financial viability and objectives, designing an assertive marketing plan, defining effective employee relations strategies, outlining a risk mitigation and management plan, and considering ethical constraints associated with an event of this scale.

The Winter Classic is an annual, regular-season, outdoor hockey game positioned as a hallmark event for growing awareness, appeal, and revenue for the NHL (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). With this event, the NHL seeks to maximize profits while creating something that is unique and highly anticipated. In 2014, a record setting 370,716 fans filled the 6 outdoor stadium games (NHL Public Relations, 2014; Cotsonika, 2014). Coveted by clubs and fans alike, the NHL has capitalized on the opportunity by positioning the Winter Classic as an event allowing players and fans to experience hockey the way it was invented; Outdoors and akin to the genuine spirit of the sport (Haines, 2008). Underscoring the event's nostalgic roots, NHL Manager of Operations, Schuyler Baehman pronounced, "this event brings us back to the way hockey was born" (KcKinna, 2008, p.1).

NBC Sports Executive Vice President, Jon Miller, first conceptualized an annual outdoor stadium game to NHL executives in 2004 (NHL Winter Classic, n.d.). Two years of convincing and a year of planning culminated on January 1, 2008 when the Buffalo Sabres hosted the

Pittsburgh Penguins in front of a crowd of 71,217 fans at Ralph Wilson Stadium (NHL Winter Classic, n.d.). The event's immense success continued the annual tradition of the New Year's Day game, and for hockey fans, the NHL Winter Classic is a manifestation of nostalgia taking the game back to its outdoor pond hockey roots (Mason, Duquette, & Scherer, 2005). An homage to the memories of young kids playing hockey on outdoor rinks, "[this event] celebrates what hockey is all about... [it] brings us back to the way hockey was born" (Andon & Houck, 2011, p. 5).

The NHL has achieved great successes in its eight Winter Classics since 2008, and a record 105,491 people attended 2014 Classic held at Michigan Stadium making it the most attended NHL game (NHL Winter Classic, n.d.). In 2014, the NHL received coveted awards including Sports League of the Year, Sports Event of the Year (Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic), and Sports Executive of the Year (Gary Bettman, Commissioner) (Sports Business Journal [SBJ], 2014a; Tucker, 2015). The NHL's stock is rising, and the Winter Classic is a proven way to increase awareness and profitability.

Many cities and teams are vying for chances to host this annual event. When analyzing the projected reach and profitability of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic pairings, it was determined that the Chicago Blackhawks and the Minnesota Wild have the most avid, loyal, and dedicated fans in the NHL (SBJ, 2015). The Chicago Blackhawks has participated in two previous Winter Classic events, including hosting duties in 2009. The Minnesota Wild has yet to participate in an outdoors event. Both teams' ability to consistently sell out regular season games (SBJ, 2015), and the Central Division rivalry growing between the two teams made the decision and location a sound choice.

The New Year's Day tradition has become a home to the Winter Classic. However, since it falls on a Sunday in 2017, the NHL gives way to the National Football League in an effort to ensure minimal competition for a strong viewership rating. Therefore, the 2017 NHL Winter Classic will take place on January 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2:00 in the afternoon.

### **History of the Minnesota Wild**

The host team, the Minnesota Wild, and the Minnesota hockey community take great pride in their passion for hockey. This commitment is reflected in the Minnesota Wild's purpose statement: "Create a greater 'State of Hockey';" and is evident in the team's core principles: "Pride & fire, selflessness, unity, and creativity" (Minnesota Wild, n.d., p.1). In 2000, after procuring the Minnesota Wild franchise, the 'State of Hockey' nickname was formed as a marketing strategy to gain excitement for the new team (Bauer, 2015). But it is more than just that for this fan-base, as Minnesota was the first state to play a hockey game (Bauer, 2015). In the late 1800's Canadians brought the sport to the Iron Range, Minnesota's most northern region (Bauer, 2015), and since then, the state has produced more youth players, more collegiate players, and more NHL players than any other (Bauer, 2015; McLaughlin, 2014; Peters, 2014). The North Stars called Minnesota home for 26 years prior to moving and becoming the Dallas Stars, a shock that is still painful to many Minnesota hockey fans. It was with much anticipation that Minnesota was announced the host for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic. Through hosting, Minnesota finds itself positioned for a unique community benefit and a nostalgic look at its heritage.

### **Facility**

TCF Bank Stadium is located on the campus of the University of Minnesota. Built in 2009, the 900,000 square foot facility features seating for 52,525 people (Gopher Sports, n.d.;

TCF Bank Stadium, n.d.), and was the first LEED Silver Certified football stadium built (Gopher Sports, n.d.; Henley, 2013). In construction and design, sustainability was an important factor in the use of this stadium. It set the standard for green building and sustainability, and has since prioritized renewable resources through further improvements to seek additional LEED certifications in operation and maintenance (Henley, 2013). In accordance with this, measures must be taken to ensure an effort toward respecting and maintaining this stadium and community's work thus far. This will be achieved through a recycling plan featuring signed bins for aluminum, plastics and paper, reducing waste by offering reusable cups for hot and cold beverages, and utilizing the stadium's run-off water system for building, maintaining and draining the ice sheet.

The 2013 improvements to the stadium plumbing for improved cold weather use (Harris, n.d.) are a key factor in the feasibility of this event at TCF Bank Stadium. Because of this, it is anticipated that all facility amenities will be utilized during this event including restroom facilities and fully functioning concessions. The stadium's 35 enclosed suites and 250 indoors club seats provide executive and sponsor seating away from the cold (Gopher Sports, n.d.). Combined with the 1,300 outdoor premium seats, these spectators will be able to utilize the 20,000 square foot indoor climate-controlled DQ Club Room (Gopher Sports, n.d.).

Described as the best sightlines of any of the outdoor games, the ice sheet will be centrally located on the football field providing 360-degree visibility (Fredrick, 2015). The media room, composed of seating for 160 members of the media, a three-tiered press box featuring expansive views of the stadium, and ten network TV camera positions (TCF Bank Stadium, n.d.), will serve as the command center for national and local media organizations. A benefit of selecting this public stadium is that it is fully compliant with Americans with

Disability Association (ADA) requirements including, but not limited to, 1,000 handicap accessible and companion seats, elevators, wide hallways, and accessible restroom facilities (TCF Bank Stadium, n.d.). In addition to these ADA elements, assisted listening device handsets and receivers, and closed captioning will be provided for the event to ensure spectators of all abilities are able to enjoy the experience.

## **Operations**

The NHL's special events team, along with assistance from the Minnesota Wild franchise will oversee the responsibilities of this Winter Classic league event with a mix of local and national support. TCF Bank Stadium has prior facility and event preparedness experience hosting the collegiate Hockey City Classic outdoor game in 2014 in addition to its numerous collegiate and professional football games (TCF Bank Stadium, n.d.). This familiarity will support local organizers and employees with an informed foundation for the successful operation of this event. Execution will require hiring staff with a knowledgeable and proactive outlook focusing on a positive experience for the spectators (Ammon, Southall, & Nagel, 2010). Temporary in-house staffing and outsourced vendors will be hired in the following areas: box office, guest services, concession and liquor sales, retail, security, and ice surface maintenance. Food and alcohol concessions will be open and managed by the University of Minnesota and TCF Bank Stadium who contracted Aramark with an even split of profits benefiting the NHL. A dedicated tent will serve as the merchandise headquarters for this event featuring branded jerseys, clothing, souvenirs, and products to help spectators stay warm. All operation areas will require skilled training for this venue in the specified area of focus.

## **Implementation**

A defined timeline framework will assist in the implementation and execution of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic. While the general public will not hear the official announcement until the NHL All Star Game, roughly eleven months prior to the event itself, behind the scenes, crews work to put in motion the detailed marketing packaging and promotion of this event.

Foundational elements like logos, imagery, displays, media kits and more must be ready for this announcement requiring a 15 month lead on the implementation of marketing and media plans.

A more detailed unveiling will take place during the off-season to promote the events and the anticipated start of the season. This aligns with respective clubs' season ticket holder distributions, and will provide buzz during a normally slow time.

### **Budget**

Based on historic budgeting and expenditures of NHL Winter Classics, it is estimated this event will have revenues of \$20 million (see Appendix A) against expenditures of \$10 million (see Appendix B), providing a profit of \$10 million (SBJ, 2014b). Expenses include four weeks of on-site planning and set-up, and multiple days of spectator events. While many of these expenses are not public record, an estimated expense budget and revenue goals will assist in ensuring this event is profitable.

The largest expenses in executing this event are the facility rental, and construction and upkeep of the playable ice surface. These are offset by an anticipated \$12 million in ticket sales, the largest portion of revenue for the event based on the projected \$215 average ticket price (SBJ, 2014b). Merchandise is expected to be a major expense including specially designed jerseys, commemorative shirts, hats, gloves, blankets, and collectables. These are projected to produce a return based on a 70% profit margin over the cost of goods sold. It is expected the 2017 NHL Winter Classic will earn an additional \$8 million in revenue from retail, advertising,

and other sources (see Appendix A) (SBJ, 2014b).

### **Purpose**

Growing the NHL brand and maximizing profits while creating something that is unique and highly anticipated is the goal of this strategic event assessment. An important piece in achieving the mission of this event includes defined strategies in the planning and execution. These determined fixed aspects of location, time, and budget now open the door to fluid, timely and continuous planning such as marketing, risk mitigation, and management. Further analysis herein assists in this development.

This thesis provides a foundation for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic based on historic exploration and recommendations derived from a thorough case analysis. Details found within are essential to adequately accomplish the mission of this event: to provide a remarkable, unique, and deserving NHL outdoor hockey experience for the passionate fans in the State of Hockey, and to show hockey fans around the world the true heritage and nostalgia Minnesota has for outdoor hockey. This mission will be achieved through thorough analysis, defined objectives, and strategic preparedness.

### **Chapter Three: Marketing Plan**

The purpose of this marketing plan is to set a foundational framework in preparation of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic. It is expected this marketing plan will be utilized extensively in preparation, implementation, and execution of this marque event. This mission will be achieved in part by focusing on defined marketing objectives with an overarching emphasis on remaining true to the NHL's core values.

#### **Product**

The Winter Classic is an annual, regular-season, outdoor hockey game promotionally positioned as a product extension of the NHL and its members for growing awareness, appeal, and revenue, from ticket and merchandise sales (Mullin, et al., 2007). This event is only plausible due to the extensions of the original product. These intangible extensions include the 52,525 capacity venue, the uncontrollable winter climate, and the nostalgia factor. Without these elements, it is simply a regular season game. Because of this, the NHL seeks to maximize profits while utilizing these extension to create something that is unique. Coveted by clubs and fans alike, the NHL has capitalized on this opportunity by positioning the Winter Classic as an event allowing players and fans to experience hockey the way it was invented: Outdoors and akin to the genuine spirit of the sport (Haines, 2008). Further extension of this product through event merchandising will provide additional stimulus to consumers spending.

#### **Project Market**

In consideration of internal strengths and weaknesses, one must analyze the current representation, research data from past events, and look at the organizations involved to provide an overall assessment. Strengths are exploited and weaknesses improved upon. External factors have been found to play a role in breaking out of routines within the marketing of sports.

Opportunities allow for enhanced revenue in previously untapped resources, while defined threats deliver a realistic approach or contingency plan to external factors that may cause damage to the event, brand, or organizations. These internal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) are additionally charted in Appendix C.

**Internal strengths and weaknesses.** The NHL Winter Classic's strengths include a strong fan loyalty and high fan affluence. In 2014, the Minnesota Wild was second only to the Chicago Blackhawks in regular season game attendance across the NHL (SBJ, 2015). This and other research indicates that these teams have strong demand and fan loyalty, and will easily replicate these figures for the outdoor Winter Classic event (Cooper, 2014; Cotsonika, 2014). A 2013 study found 33 percent of NHL fans audience made over \$100,000 per year, compared to just 19 percent among other sports (Thompson, 2014). Due to this affluence, a strong potential lies in the capitalization of pricing and merchandising sales. Coupled with the high nostalgia factor (Andon & Houck, 2011), positioning well-selected merchandise products with soundly defined pricing strategies will maximize revenue potentials.

An internal review of the NHL's weaknesses shows challenges with viewership and demographics. Hockey has limited national popularity with a markedly predominate white male audience (Thompson, 2014; SBD, 2010). Furthermore, product comprehension can be difficult to grasp to the casual viewer (Bryan, 2008).

**External opportunities and threats.** The overarching external element that threatens this event is a decline in viewership. Sports demographer Rich Luker has correlated the largest decline in avid sports fans as those aged 12-34 years old (Mickle, 2014). This age range thoroughly encompasses the Millennial demographic. This can also be a result of an oversaturation of outdoor hockey stadium games, alternative programming, weather, and a

declining demographic. In 2014 the NHL held a record six outdoor stadium games – one Winter Classic, one Heritage Classic, and four Stadium Series games (Rogers, 2015; Peters, 2015a; Peters, 2015b). Each were wildly popular in attendance, but the overexposure left many feeling the elements that made the event special were no longer unique (Cotsonika, 2014; Rogers, 2015; Peters, 2015a; Peters, 2015b). This has inferences of a shift from maturity toward the decline phase of the product life cycle.

In an effort to capitalize on these threats, the NHL's greatest opportunities lie within building the fan base, Winter Classic audience, and reengaging the declining Millennial demographic. The Harris Poll of sport fan demographics ranked Millennials over all others in the importance of enjoying the social aspect of sports, having a family tradition of watching, and enjoying the speed of play (Pollack, 2015). Furthermore, growth can be found in the more than 160 countries and territories in which the Winter Classic will be aired in (NHL Public Relations, 2014). By promoting this event through social aspects to secure the Millennial demographic and by appealing to the international audience, the NHL has great opportunity for growth.

### **Position**

A resolve to capitalize on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will be directed through marketing mix strategies and implementations. Positioning the Winter Classic can be defined with the two distinctly different target markets, the attendee and the televised audience. Proper positioning of this event helps to create an image that is appealing to our defined target market by incorporating elements from the marketing mix.

Staying true to the mission of this event, the NHL aims to position the Winter Classic as a unique outdoor hockey experience with heritage and nostalgia. These foundations show a desire for familiarity and comfort – an intangible feeling that highlights the importance of the

relationship between the league, team, community and fans. This message will be replicated in the verbal and nonverbal communications through interviews, imagery, and design. Tangible products will further develop the event brand through team-specific special designed merchandise and event-specific memorabilia. Desiring similar experiences for the television audience as with the attendees, nostalgic memories will be presented through all available display and broadcast communication channels. It is important to portray the game in a way that both casual and avid fans will enjoy not only watching, but also spectating. The positioning of the Winter Classic will be further aided with the forthcoming exploration on these elements.

### **People**

Defining the target audience of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic is achieved by analyzing the various consumptions of the event. In addition to being an outdoor 50,000-plus seat stadium event, the NHL Winter Classic will be positioned on network TV as a hallmark event for the NHL in hopes of growing the hockey fan base. By classifying consumers as avid hockey fans, prior or current hockey players (of all levels), and casual sports fans a plan for marketing toward these consumers can be established.

Hockey has the richest fan viewership of all sports with 33 percent of their audience making over \$100,000 per year, and the average fan is a white male between the ages of 35 and 54 (Thompson, 2014). For this event, the target market will go beyond the current hockey fan scope with the promise of attracting and growing the fan base. The Chicago Blackhawks and the Minnesota Wild have the most avid, loyal and dedicated fans in the NHL (SBJ, 2015), and is a primary reason these teams were chosen for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic match-up. Avid NHL fans are consumers that frequently watch games, seek out information on teams and players, and have the highest spending of all fans on merchandise (Syracuse, 2015). While attracting the avid

fan for attendance of this match-up will not prove difficult, ensuring fans watch from home is important for Winter Classic advertisers and key sponsorships.

Prior and current players will be drawn and engaged by linking this event with memories of playing outdoors as a child through nostalgic advertising and creative design. Showcasing professionals playing outdoor hockey evokes the theory known as “Basking in Reflected Glory” (BIRGing), which provides the distinction of commonality through association (Bee & Havitz, 2010). It is believed this target will be achieved with minimal focus on placement.

Targeting a casual sports fan demographic will require a focused effort to sway viewership away from competing programming through consistent coverage and lead-up promotions. Television advertising provides a consistent vehicle for getting in front of sports fans with a well-designed message to encourage appointment viewing. However, this effort should not be limited to television advertising to achieve the needed reach. That is, implementation in a variety of mediums including television, radio, print, and online promotions should also be utilized.

### **Packaging**

As previously detailed, packaging the Winter Classic with a premise of nostalgia will evoke greater rationalization in this event’s audience (Andon & Houck, 2011). Further advantage is taken when this nostalgia is represented in the design of advertising and merchandise. This has proven to be a successful branding element since the event’s inception (Andon & Houck, 2011). It will be achieved through advertising design, throwback jerseys and merchandise, contests, bundled events, and street promotions (Mullin et al., 2007). Mullin et al. (2007) describe signage as a static image that is received based on the awareness and feelings of the consumer. Nostalgic components of the Winter Classic can be portrayed in touching moments that will tug at the

emotions of the viewer. In order to create a design with nostalgic themes, yet remain relevant and exciting, advertisers must create new and innovative ways to express this nostalgia. Coupling this event with other activities that align with the mission will extend the value. This can include family-friendly activities, youth hockey match-ups during intermission, previously utilized alumni games, and meet and greet opportunities. A merchandise “throwback” design, similar to the styles of the original six NHL teams, has been a key element of every past Winter Classic game. It has provided an extension of the event that goes beyond the event timeline to develop and maintain the consistent nostalgic message year after year. It is anticipated this will be extended through new products and designs. Further branding within the venue, in promotions, community and street events, and bundled packages will help create local fan and community buzz making the experience attractive and enjoyable.

### **Price**

In its 8 previous Winter Classic events, the NHL has found great success in ticket and merchandise sales (Cotsonika, 2014). A benefit of having the richest fans in all of professional sports (Thompson, 2014), paired with the top two teams in fan loyalty (SBJ, 2015), means the NHL can afford to push the limits in terms of event attendance and merchandise pricing. Sell-outs have been a consistent result in prior venues (Peters, 2015a; Cotsonika, 2014). Consumers feed off the uniqueness of attending this event and will revel in its reminiscence (Bee & Havitz, 2010). Therefore, it is anticipated pricing strategies will average at \$215 per ticket, a premium over regular season tickets. The higher ticket prices coupled with more than 30,000 additional seats over a traditional game proves financially savvy delivering nearly 12 million dollars in revenue. Furthermore, pricing of custom event merchandise will remain consistent with regular season products including jerseys, hats, and more. Historically proven, it is anticipated the

custom 2017 Winter Classic jersey design and supplementary merchandise will be desirable due to the successful event branding.

### **Promotion**

The large scale promotion of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic will require tried and true methods, as well as creative and timely trends to engage all target market demographics. The NHL's executive vice president of marketing, Brian Jennings, stated, "It's important to have the casual sports fan tuning [in] and saying 'Wow, this is really cool (to see) hockey played outdoors like it used to be'" (as cited in Andon & Houck, 2011, p. 5). A thorough promotions plan will accomplish this through an organized, concerted effort comprised of advertising, activities, publicity, sponsorships, public relations, and personal selling. In this section, strategic actions will be outlined for optimal effectiveness.

**Advertising.** Utilization of existing regular-season game television advertising will provide the most direct path for the event message to consumers. This captive audience will be the highest viewer and attendee of the Winter Classic. By positioning the message through existing broadcasting agreements with NBC, this will also be one of the most cost effective ways to reach the consumer. Mullin et al. suggest that, "...nothing compares to television in advertising reach and the ability to convey to a mass audience..." (p. 251). In prior years, the NHL has showcased the two participating teams in a reality documentary series leading up to the event. This consistent, weekly look into the personal lives of the athletes and functionality of the team helps develop a stronger connection between the athletes and fans (Peetz, 2011).

Additionally, airing commercials on NBC and its affiliate channels, casual sports fans will become more familiar with the event. It is believed that this repeated and consistent coverage will procure higher viewership. Additional outlets that are positioned toward direct consumers

will be utilized including in-arena signage, game programs, team and league websites, email communications, and media relations.

**Publicity.** One of the newest marketing strategies is publicity in the form of content marketing. This strategy involves working with influential people that have large social followings based on their accumulation of their expert qualifying content (Fidelman, 2015). No longer are influential individuals only associated with television, radio or news programs, but they can also include sports bloggers and podcasters. Blogging provides free content to online followers much like newspapers, however, the social aspect of it provides a relationship between the blogger and follower. Podcasts have been an increasingly popular way to get content, and banter ideas and predictions. By interacting with these influencers through non-paid and sponsored promotions marketers can reach both a broad demographic of sports fans as well as focused regional markets to boost desired attendance and televised viewership in a natural, content-based strategy.

**Promotional activities.** Regular season games leading up to this event provide opportunities for numerous promotional activities among consumers. These include giveaways, raffles, and contests. Products such as signed Winter Classic jerseys, tickets for raffle drawings, or sponsor products provide a platform for the event and mission to be promoted to consumers. Social media campaigns such as the #mywinterclassic hashtag allow fans to become part of the action with the hopes of their photo or memory being shared nationally (Flomenbaum, 2015). This is a great way to extend authentic and organic promotion to second-tier consumers.

**Public relations.** Developing positive relationships with its target audiences is an important aspect of growing the NHL brand. Community and media relations are two ways the

organization can promote a positive message. Internal public relations is also tasked with minimizing any distractions that may cause unwanted negative attention.

**Community relations.** The NHL's goal of growing the sport revolves heavily around establishing hockey as a principal youth sport. This is achieved through many community outreach events that provide under-privileged youth equipment and training to allow them to be active in this sport. In doing so, the NHL provides a foundation of understanding that will encourage many years of future involvement. For the Winter Classic, local youth programs will be selected to participate during intermission periods.

**Media relations.** The ten-month timeline from media announcement to event day provides a platform of promotion that extends into the regular season news and media reports. This allows for anticipation and drawn out consistent message to existing hockey followers. A key contributor to this is providing consistent access and information to influencers and the media. This will be accomplished through press releases, news conferences, private events, and media guides that will be provided to local and national print, television, radio, and online sport and news media. For the Winter Classic, media relations activities will also include in-kind ticket and media exchange, passes that gain access to pre-event interviews, sponsored parties, and climate controlled areas.

**Personal selling.** Personal selling efforts are a large part of converting the casual sports fan or first-time hockey attendee into a committed fan. Because this event is expected to sell out, emphasis on priority purchasing opportunities will be an effective way to engage these consumers. By providing season ticket holders with priority purchase opportunities it is anticipated the Minnesota Wild will see an increase in season ticket commitments. This message will be conveyed through the aforementioned advertising mediums. Additional personal selling

strategies consist of direct communications to past season ticket holders, bulk ticket purchasers, and game-day and website form inquires. These communications will include personal phone calls, emails, direct mailings, and informational appointments.

**Sponsorships.** Sponsors have a mutual benefitted agreement in the promotion of this event. Bridgestone Tires (the official tire of the NHL) has been the title sponsor for this NHL Winter Classic since its inception in 2008, and will continue to do so through 2020 (NHL Public Relations, 2015). The official event title will reflect this sponsorship as the 2017 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic. Discover is the official credit card of the NHL, and will continue this sponsorship through a card member discounted merchandise promotion. By staying true to regular season sponsors, the NHL builds long lasting relationships with their partners and earns advertising revenue that benefits the league as a whole. It is the NHL's belief that these relationships playing a major role in portraying a consistent brand and, therefore, the NHL provides its sponsors added value on the larger event platform.

### **Place**

When choosing the location for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic there were many cities and teams vying for a chance to host the event. As previously mentioned, the Minnesota Wild has a dedicated fan base by means of consistently sold out regular season games (SBJ, 2015). Furthermore, it has been suggested that outdoor games are better received when players are fighting the elements of a cold January winter day (Wyshynski, 2015). There were few options that met the required criteria of an open-air stadium in the Twin Cities. TCF Bank Stadium was selected in part to its facilities preparedness with prior experience of hosting the 2014 Hockey Day Minnesota and various NFL football games. Because it is a regular season game, an existing relationship with Ticketmaster provides consumers reliable and worry-free transactions.

### **Promise: Evaluation of Strategy and Tactics**

While the proactive approach to executing this event is utilized to ensure the implementation of the event's mission and values, it clarifies the organizational approach in instances of adjustment. Evaluating the effectiveness of this plan should be made before, during, and after its operation allowing for desired revisions. Gathering internal feedback from ticket and merchandise sales, as well as external opinions and suggestions from sponsors and media will assist in the planning process (Pederson et al., 2011). Some promotional campaigns, specifically social media, will require immediate analytics of trends and interactions while the event is in progress. Obtaining this information and reacting quickly will improve the overall event experience and success.

There are two areas to focus on when determining the success of this event, the experience and the outcome (Wood, 2009). The experiential analysis looks to the fans, teams, sponsors, and organization to determine if the event succeeded in terms of achieving its mission, values, and enjoyment. Analyzing this information will assist in the preparation of future Winter Classic events. This can be evaluated through a series of mixed-method approaches, which would yield the most valid and reliable data. By integrating sales and attendance data with in-person, on-location, pre and post-game interviews, questionnaires, and next-day emailed questionnaires there is a strong likelihood of obtaining quality data. As an incentive for participation, smaller giveaways or contests could prove effective.

The outcome analysis will measure hard data including attendance figures, televised viewership market data, ticket and merchandise sales, and an overall return on investment. This information will express a distinct representation of the elements that were successful and which were not. These can include the teams, the location, the promotions, as well as uncontrollable

factors such as the weather. At its conclusion, information gathered here will be used to better assist future NHL Winter Classic games.

## **Chapter Four: Employee/Volunteer Planning**

Necessary management structures, communications, and feedback must be in place for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic to ensure effective output, high employee efficacy, and retention. In order to achieve the mission of this event, managers will need to position themselves and the team for optimal successes by encouraging a team atmosphere. It is believed these are integral parts of the process in achieving a common and unified mission. This is accomplished through the promotion of individual growth and collaboration by reminding associates that each is an integral part of the process. This chapter will explore achieving these standards through an efficient and balanced set of both task-oriented and relationship-oriented skills. These management approaches, when properly implemented, provide leaders the resources needed to direct their team while generating high efficiency production.

### **Task-Oriented Skills and Rationale**

Task-oriented individuals are those who prefer to follow detailed parameters for executing a purposeful assignment or project. These individuals often need structure and have difficulty focusing in flexible work environments (Friedman, 2013). Task-oriented leadership follows these same principals, but requires employee adherence through the direction of the manager. While some leaders may implement this in an effective manor, many times it is directed in a coercive or pacesetting style that can often leave employees feeling a lack of trust, creativity, and appreciation.

To effectively implement task-oriented skills into a mixed-use management style there are key steps and tools to incorporate. Determining each associate's productivity and personality styles must be a primary goal. One method of establishing this is through personality tests like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2008) or Social

Styles Model (Tracom Group, 2015). Through personality assessments, management is able to provide employees the tools they need to achieve high self-efficacy. By knowing core competency of employees, managers can adjust leadership styles to properly motivate and retain critical employees. For example, an associate who tests high on analytical behavior and controlled responsiveness could be motivated by historic data and quantitative goals. Through the actions developed in a performance management process, managers can successfully implement a task-oriented structure by adequately defining the organization's goals, measuring employee output, and providing necessary feedback (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2008). Knowing the social style of the employee will help achieve organizational goals through a tailored task-oriented structure. Some positions which compliment a task-oriented approach for the Winter Classic will include security personnel, concession associates, custodial, and operations execution. These require a high degree of thorough efficiency with well-defined tasks and requirements.

### **Relationship-Oriented Skills and Rationale**

Building relationships is an essential part of gaining employee respect and team morale. As with task-oriented leadership styles, knowing associates' personality types will also play a key role in their ability to build and develop these relationships. A tool in creating an encouraging environment is by promoting a growth mindset. Unlike a fixed-mindset, the growth-mindset focuses on the process of achievement rather than the results (Dweck, 2014). Utilizing a growth-mindset is another example of adjusting leadership to accommodate the personality type of associates. By acknowledging the efforts associates make, managers allow these employees to become confident in their ability to be creative and resourceful in their own task management.

Ryan and Deci (2000) define self-determination theory (SDT) as “an approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods...that highlights the importance of humans’ evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation” (p.68). These inner resources are derived through high self-efficacy, and provide an abundance of motivation through autonomy. This is especially the case when harnessed in collaborative efforts. Leaders who encourage teams to build on each other’s individual successes position the organization to realize the gains of a high self-efficacy chain reaction. Leaders that promote self-efficacy allow their team to see the difference they are making in an organization’s overall goals, and provide a sense of appreciation and accomplishment that will build upon itself. Further examples of successful relationship-oriented techniques can include mentoring programs and sabbaticals for employees to grow or renew their passions by broadening their education through example and experience (Noe et al., 2008). These efforts of appreciation through a growth mindset allow associates to reach their true potential on their own terms with encouragement and support. Some positions which compliment a relationship-oriented approach for the Winter Classic will include customer service, suite attendants, sales and marketing teams, and media and public relations executives. These require a high degree of personal and collaborative interactions, and self-determination for creating a successful event.

## **Conclusion**

While studies have shown the task-oriented traits garner the most productivity out of their followers, both task and relationship-oriented approaches have a significant effect on employee satisfaction based on the individual’s needs (Tabernero, Chambel, Curren, & Arana, 2009). Utilization of an effective mix of employee satisfaction and productivity must be the NHL and Winter Classic’s goal in recruiting and retaining high quality associates. Managers that possess

an instinctual versatility of task/relationship skills and leadership applications will benefit the organization through the cultivation of a positive working environment. It is these leaders that will excel at cross-functional collaboration, seek out innovation, engage employees in task-based accomplishments, and build relationships for the betterment of the organization and execution of the 2017 Winter Classic.

## **Chapter Five: Risk Management Plan**

TCF Bank Stadium, NHL, and the Minnesota Wild owe a duty to their spectators and guests to protect them from unreasonable and foreseeable risk of injury (Cotton & Wolohan, 2003). This is accomplished by providing a safe facility by minimizing this risk. The purpose of this risk management assessment is to initiate a foundational framework in preparation of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic that documents proper steps to avoid, reduce, retain, and transfer risk. Following the five-step risk management decision-making process, as developed by Head and Horn (1997), this report will include identifying and analyzing risks, determining avoidance, reduction, retention and transfer techniques, strategic implementation of techniques, and effectiveness evaluation for future adjustment (Cotton & Wolohan, 2003; Head & Horn, 1997). It is expected that this assessment and report will be a key contributor to the development, implementation, and management of this marquee event. Details found within are essential to accomplishing the mission of this event, to provide a remarkable, unique, and deserving NHL outdoor hockey experience for the passionate fans in the State of Hockey, in a safe and enjoyable environment.

### **Risk Identification Tools and Facility Event Management**

When assessing a facility there are numerous areas of concern that require thorough identification, strategic prevention, and planned management. This process is most commonly referred to as the D.I.M. process, an acronym for developing, implementing, managing risk mitigation (Cotton & Wolohan, 2003). These defined stages are helped by data collected through site surveys. Prior to conducting the assessment of TCF Bank Stadium two risk-identification and management tools were introduced, a Standard of Practice evaluation of other facilities provided a baseline foundation of concerns and risks (see Appendix D), and a Risk Category and

Treatment Matrix utilized to determine the likelihood of risks while ranking their severity with a low, moderate, critical, and catastrophic concern analysis (see Appendix E) (Cotton & Wolohan, 2003). These risk management tools allow planners the time to recommend and implement preventative and reactive measures in the event of realized concerns.

The facility event management role is imperative to implementing and managing a risk mitigation plan. To gain insight into these risk mitigating recommendations and practices an interview was conducted with TCF Bank Stadium's contracted event manager, Tom Jackson of Contemporary Services Corporation (CSC). "We have a plethora of training for our event staff to provide the fullest care. Every employee is encouraged to go through a 40 hour course in addition to the required facility orientation" (T. Jackson, personal communication, February 22, 2016). This interview further verified identified risks while providing an educated solution for preventative and reactive planning through the standards of practice, as well as an improved understanding of event management.

### **Facility Assessment and Standards of Practice**

There were six risks noted during the initial site survey of TCF Bank Stadium. These included critical weather risks of an open-air stadium, crowd management risks of a 50,000+ capacity venue, health risks of an outdoor winter event, injury risks with slips and falls due to snow and ice build-up, risks of disorderly conduct due to alcohol consumption, and risks of terrorism with a national audience and over 50,000 people in attendance. As seen in Appendix C, these concerns have similar standards of practice within the facility hosting industry including Target Field and Target Center, located within 5 miles of TCF Bank Stadium. By implementing similar preventative and reactive plans while tailoring them to suit the specific needs of TCF

Bank Stadium, a risk management plan will provide a definitive response to these potential threats.

### **Risk Assessment and Treatment**

An open-air stadium welcomes many weather related risks. Rain, heat, snow, and sun can all play a role in causing injury to guests. When critical weather is of concern, training and preparedness plays an important role.

There is an evacuation plan in the event of a catastrophic weather event. We have multiple evacuation locations to accommodate all guests, vendors and staff. Every time there is an event, staff are trained on where to go and how to guide guests. There are also signs indicating evacuation locations (see Appendix F). (T. Jackson, personal communication, February 22, 2016)

Having a plan in place for critical weather concerns and staff that know how to implement this plan is an important contingency to this low frequency high loss risk.

A comprehensive crowd management component to a risk management plan is comprised of many details for a safe and free moving environment (Ammon et. al, 2010). As Jackson pointed out, “TCF Bank Stadium features numerous egress and ingress points which makes it a lot faster on our end and a lot safer for everyone” (T. Jackson, personal communication, February 22, 2016). To supplement this well designed facility, signage plays a vital role in educating guests on their path into and out of the stadium (see Appendix G).

Since the NHL Winter Classic takes place in the middle of winter in an open-air stadium in Minnesota, there is the potential for temperatures could be below freezing and an accumulation of snow and ice on the property. This creates a unique set of risks ranging from low to moderate loss. Weather related concerns must be assessed and addressed in the hours

leading up to the event to reduce the risk of spectator injury. Measures will be taken to ensure the facility stairs and concourses are free of ice and slippery conditions to prevent accidents (see Appendix H). From frostbite to slipping on snow or ice covered paths, the uncertainties have the potential to cause concerns for guests and staff. “We assist anyone that slips and falls or has frostbite to First Aid personnel” (T. Jackson, personal communication, February 22, 2016) (see Appendix I). An outsourced First Aid servicer provides a transfer of liability for the facility, staff, and tenants. An assured, qualified medical team is an important aspect to treat guests in the event of a medical emergency, and innovative approaches like mobile texting helps to speed assistance to guests in need (see Appendix J).

Disorderly conduct is a medium frequency, low loss concern. It is most often a by-product of alcohol over consumption, and therefore, prevention is an important part of mitigating this risk. Outsourcing alcohol sales further reduces and transfers this burden of liability to the vendor. TCF Bank Stadium contracted vendor, Aramark, is consistently ranked one of the best vendors in the industry for their innovative “Fan Focus” training (Ammon et. al, 2010). This includes compliance training and a consistent approach in setting expectations for consumers (Ammon et. al, 2010). Restrictions, such as beverage and sales limitations (see Appendix K), support efforts toward a reduced risk environment. The alcohol policy in a risk management plan includes defined processes for verifying and serving guests, observing over consumption behaviors, and ejecting and reporting intoxicated, disruptive, or unruly spectators.

A more recent concern for Jackson is terrorism. A large stadium with more than 50,000 people can be seen as a prime target for those looking to cause mass harm or damage. A risk of this degree involves collaboration the local police department and gained intelligence training. This low frequency, catastrophic loss concern can be preventable by making it a focus among

operational management and implementing precautionary methods. These precautions can include command center facility observance, metal detector screening (see Appendix L), and a long list of prohibited items including everything from purses and handbags to firearms and knives.

### **Risk Reduction to Lessen Liability**

Risk management comes in many forms including preventing loss from injury or lawsuit and mitigating loss of goodwill (Gladden, McDonald, & Barr, 2009). Since identifying, assessing, and reporting these and other risks, this comprehensive risk management assessment will be executed. Through these outlined methods, staff will have an active hand in preventing and mitigating spectator risks such as overconsumption, slips-and-falls, and security threats. It is the strategy of the organizers to avoid or reduce injuries through skilled training requirements.

An alternative method to lessen liability is by obtaining proactive insurance to transfer financial risk in the event of other methods being exhausted. This can protect stakeholders in negligent wrongdoing. Liability, umbrella, event, medical, and catastrophic injury are some types of insurance coverage necessary to protect the business, facility, owners, and contracted tenants from financial loss or lawsuits from staff, participants, volunteers, administrators, and guests (Cotton & Wolohan, 2003). When prevention fails and the duty to protect is in question, insurance can support the stakeholders through litigation and make the organization, facility, and guests whole again.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this risk management plan for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic provided an important assessment of TCF Bank Stadium. This is done by identifying significant factors of the facility, identifying and classifying possible areas of risk, implementing policies and procedures

to mitigate risk, and determining approaches to avoid, reduce, and transfer risk. It is expected that this overview will be utilized extensively in the further planning and management of this and future Winter Classics to ensure success in both consumer experience and management outcome.

## **Chapter Six: Ethical Analysis**

Recent discoveries of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), concussions, and their long-term effects have brought about a major decline in youth participation in high impact sports (King, 2015). Since a large demographic of Winter Classic viewers and attendees are current and former athletes, an obligation on the part of the NHL, clubs, coaches, athletes, and fans to address and reduce this growing problem is necessary. In preparation of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic, an ethical analysis of fighting in hockey must be addressed to ensure a safe and refined competitive event in an effort to sustain and grow the sport. This will be achieved through individual and team goals, objectives, and an idealistic vision for the behavior and intentions of this event. Through this commitment, the NHL Winter Classic will position itself for gained viewership and fans by encouraging individual and team morale, and ethical behavior amongst athletes, coaches, and staff to provide fans a responsible and sophisticated experience. This chapter will explore, reflect and analyze key ethical viewpoints to develop a comprehensive approach to achieve this objective.

### **Ethics of Fighting**

Fighting in hockey has been a highly contested topic amongst reporters, players, coaches, and fans for the last century. Players willingly engage in fighting to protect their teammates, coaches encourage fighting to spark energy in a lacking team, and fans cheer with excitement when the gloves come off. While most individuals seem to encourage the activity during the game, do they all agree with the premise and philosophical stance it takes? Additionally, if there is a philosophical and ethical alternative to fighting, is there a chance that it can be eliminated? These are some questions this chapter aims to systematically rationalize and clarify while considering the three philosophical theories of teleology, deontology, and existentialism. These

theories enable distinctly different views on values and reason, and can provide rationale for all sides of fighting in hockey.

### **History of Fighting**

Fighting has been a strategic part of hockey since 1922 when the NHL established the ‘five for fighting’ policy penalizing players for this extracurricular activity (Chambers, 2013). It was not until 1967, resulting from the NHL expansion, when teams felt a greater need to “compensate for a lack of talent by fighting” (Chambers, 2013, p. 1). Affectionately referred to as the goon era (Chambers, 2013), teams began staffing “enforcers” to take or initiate fights in order to protect prized athletes or injure opponents. However, since head injuries and fatalities began to occur in enforcers, fighting has slowly been on the decline (Burn-Murdoch, & Jackson, 2013). This decline has sparked new interest in the long-held debate over the justification of fighting in the NHL. The NHL has distinct rules against fighting, and include an “instigator,” “third man in,” and a heightened penalty for a “final five” game misconduct (Chambers, 2013, p. 1). Further rules regarding gear and equipment have also been implemented to reduce injuries to players due to hits to the head and face. In 2013 the NHL was faced with a class-action lawsuit over prior players’ brain trauma caused by fighting (Chambers, 2013). It is circumstances like this that push the league to implement additional rules and swifter punishment. By moving toward a lesser-practiced and more ethical stance on fighting it is substantiated that fewer injuries will result.

### **Teleological Analysis**

Teleology holds the position that “decisions can be judged good or bad based on their outcomes or consequences” (Malloy & Zakus, 1995, p. 40). This theory enables believers to behave in ways that could be seen as immoral or unethical in order to achieve a goal. Most

fighting in hockey falls under this jurisdiction. For example, Team A is losing and looking sluggish. Player A from Team A fights with a Player B from Team B. After the fight, Player A's teammates applaud their player's ability to engage the team and it lights a competitive fire in them and goes on to win the game. In this example a teleological approach uses fighting as a means to an end. The teleological approach, however, does not consider the rules or duty toward another person due to the ultimate decision based on the outcome. This means-to-an-end method establishes a desired result, and provides actions that will accomplish that goal (Malloy & Zakus, 1995).

### **Deontological Analysis**

Deontologists believe that decisions are made by abiding to "certain principles of conduct, duties, or rules" (Malloy & Zakus, 1995). This theory can be explained best through two actions in fighting in hockey. The first and most callous scenario involves an absolute theory that enables players to justify a "tit for tat" and retaliation in-kind mentality; meaning, every time a perceived injustice occurs a reaction is justified or dutifully prescribed. This, however, could create impetuous disorder. On the contrary, it could be comprehensively accepted that should a player ignore intentional or unintentional wrongs and leave the decision up to a third party (i.e., referee), fairness can be present and justice distributed effectively (Lewison & Palma, 2012). In this theory sportsmanship, respect, and talent will triumph over disrespect, fighting, and injury even if the score does not reflect the personal and team victory. But what is the feasibility of implementing such a philosophy throughout a team? In hockey a penalty for fighting will provide a team an advantage (i.e., power play) to capitalize on in that regardless of the instigation or reaction, a player who fights will be penalized. By maintaining a deontological approach one creates an opportunity for an advantage. By teaching a team to focus on reducing

the opponent's advantages while capitalizing on their own advantages one shifts the focus from causing a momentary advantage to earning a prescribed advantage. This will allow players to focus on honing their hockey skills over their fighting skills and restore the fair-play mentality.

### **Existentialist Analysis**

Albert, Denise, and Peterfreund explain existentialism is “genuine integrity” and the ability to take responsibility for one's free will (as cited in Malloy & Zakus, 1995, p. 45). It is a resignation of the core deontological and teleological beliefs founding rather on decisions and actions made with absolute responsibility for the consequences (Malloy & Zakus, 1995). In this theory a coach can direct all of his players to instigate fights in an effort to throw off their game, get in the opponent's head, or even cause injury. Since these actions have the potential to cause pain it is the underlying means to an end that satisfies one's existence and choice. This is often presented in an “enforcer” role where the sole purpose of the player is to fight, injure or intimidate the opposing team to procure a negative effect in their skills. It is this belief that has the potential of alienating fan bases and causing discord among players who do not believe in the strategy.

### **Conclusion**

Although arguments for and against fighting in hockey can be rationalized through the teleological, deontological, and existentialism ethical analyses, it is clear the best course of action is to abstain from unethical behavior that intentionally causes harm to another human being through promoting a ruled deontological approach with accepted consequences for actions. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests, “while winning a fight generated more short-term momentum, it would take about 30 to 60 fights to win a game” (Burn-Murdoch, & Jackson, 2013, p. 1). This policy of safety and fair play is one the Minnesota Wild strive to implement and

promote for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic. This will be achieved by fielding a team of athletes, coaches, and administrators dedicated to the objective of working hard to win through talent and capitalized opportunities. For the Winter Classic, it is believed this sense of sportsmanship and camaraderie will bring about greater accomplishments in the overarching goal of growing the NHL brand and audience.

## **Chapter Seven: Personal Statement**

Concluding this 2017 NHL Winter Classic event plan has brought a sense of achievement and recognition of an abundant understanding of management within the sports industry. It has also allowed me to recall the path that brought me to this point, and realize a shift in focus toward actualizing the goals I set forth to achieve when beginning the Masters of Arts Sport Management program at Concordia University – St. Paul. This chapter will establish the leadership traits I aim to achieve by creating a personal vision statement, set a five-year plan for effective integration, while reflecting on my original purpose and goals for this program.

It is my belief that good leadership starts with a solid foundation of personal introspection, and an authentic desire for continual learning. Many individuals have an innate sense of motivating, engaging, inspiring and leading people. The theory that leaders are born with the ability is true, to a point. But that does not mean leadership cannot be learned. Effective leaders were once good followers learning from good leaders. Learning from the best can afford many individuals the ability to emulate and achieve great leadership techniques, and therefore, being a leader that can inspire others is my goal.

Aside from parents, teachers and coaches are often the source of primary influence in a person's life. Teachers and coaches possess authentic and servant leadership traits that afford them the ability to earn the trust of their followers by leading with their best intentions in mind. These are two leadership approaches I with which I aim to align. This chapter will reflect on my personal journey through pursuing an advanced degree in sport management, explain how the program will assist me in my pursuit of career and life objectives, and establish a five-year plan for developing and achieving my leadership aspirations.

### **Pursuing Sports**

Sports and recreation have had an impact on my life from an early age. At the age of 8 a friend invited me to participate in summer tennis lessons. I approached my parents on the opportunity primarily because it meant I would be able to spend more time with my friend. It was the first real decision I made, and was never something my parents pushed on me, unlike like parents of today. As years went on, I casually participated without much greater aspiration. By all indications of success, my competitive involvement in the sport should have ended in high school. However, the coach on my university's team learned of my background and approached me looking to add depth to the roster. The opportunity would allow me to dig deeper into a sport I enjoyed while getting necessary advanced training. Being an NCAA student-athlete is no small feat, as it requires a dedicated balance between commitments to both schooling and your team. It was, however, a decision I made with great enthusiasm. The camaraderie, the encouragement, and the return on invested effort taught me many things the classroom could not. It is no coincidence these techniques are common elements in my pursuit of effective leadership.

### **Career Objectives**

In reflecting on this decision, I realized that my initial career objectives had gotten off track. When graduating with a bachelor's degree in marketing I was passionate about my pursuit of working in the sport-marketing field. I had specific aspirations of working with the Minnesota Wild, as hockey had been a big part of my life since attending the well-known hockey school, Shattuck St. Mary's. Like many recent college graduates experience, opportunities present themselves, paths change, and I found myself working in real estate marketing. Coupled with the fact that I am a fiercely loyal person, voluntarily deviating from my path and commitments to follow my passion was a decision I knew needed rationalized legitimacy and support. Pursuing a master's degree in sport management would provide me the backing and time needed to realign

my objectives and achieve my goals.

Utilizing the teachings obtained in this program has afforded me a well-rounded approach to effective leadership - a significant piece of every organization's puzzle. These include applying ethical, motivational, legal, and regulatory aspects of management, as well as marketing, financial and operational aspects of the sport and recreation industry. Through the micro-analyzed review of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic I am able to understand the role and function each of these individual pieces contribute to create the overall semblance of a successful event. While each role is complex in their own right, having a thorough understanding of their importance and implications on their own, and how they link to create a united front will assist greatly in my preparedness for the numerous functions within an organization.

### **Leadership Aspirations**

“To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world” is a famous inspirational quote by the poet Dr. Seuss (as cited by Coffroth, 2013, p. 1). With this in mind, what impact have I made on the lives around me, and what impacts have others made on me? Often times we, as a society, do not stop and consider the actions we make toward setting the standard or changing the course of peoples' lives. In keeping a focused path, what have I done to encourage others? Looking back I can reflect on the instances and people I feel I have had an impression on and know my limited leadership served a purpose. I was effective in teaching new skills, growing confidence in their abilities, and encouraging them as they move on to other opportunities. I look to build on this moving forward.

To achieve the vision and objectives set forth, an examination of my personal leadership and beliefs will allow me to develop and alter my approach to leadership. Reflecting on my prior actions and personality, I find myself to be agreeable yet analytical, a fair, approachable and

open-minded person. While I tend to fall on the extroverted spectrum, I find myself struggling to do so in large group settings, yet excelling in one-on-one settings. Being an effective leader will require modifications to my current personality traits requiring continual introspection and deliberate utilization of tools and techniques learned. Some say leaders are born with the innate ability to lead, but this is not the case for me. The growth mindset theory by Carol Dweck (2014) states learning and development are a process that can be fostered through positivity and continual effort, not a fixed trait (Briceno, 2012). I will have to actively apply my learned advanced leadership traits with consistency in a growth mindset to the point where they will become second nature. This will require a deliberate plan and execution.

### **Five-Year Leadership Plan**

According to Kouzes and Posner (2015), exemplary leaders are known to engage in five elements that elevate their followers. These include modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2015). In addition, they theorize credible leadership as having four main qualities: honesty, competence, forward-looking, and inspiring (2012, p. 36). I feel these elements and credible leadership traits have a tiered reach in an effective leadership plan. Pursuit of effective leadership is most successful with an organized plan, strategic goals, and continued learning. A five-year plan provides adequate time to initiate, execute, establish, and realize the gains of actively engaging in improved leadership. In five years I hope to have gained credibility through my honest and authentic interactions by being a knowledgeable resource. This will in turn provide opportunities for forward-thinking and inspiring others to do the same. By establishing the objectives I set forth to achieve in obtaining a master's in sport management it is clear I launched my five-year plan when I enrolled in this program and began setting a baseline of self-reflection,

learned assessment strategies, and recognizing and seeking mentorship.

A vision statement is an organization's statement of their core values - a defined approach to every decision the organization makes (Nelson, 2016). In order to remain true to this five-year plan, my personal core values must be established as a baseline. After much consideration, I have determined my vision statement and core leadership values to be as follows: Build relationships, embrace individuals' diverse qualities, and give more than I take. All factors of leadership and motivation will revolve around these core values. Only through finding my voice and clarifying my personal values will I be able to lead by example – the first step in creating credible, honest, and authentic leadership.

I feel it is vitally important for employees to feel their career environment is a second family that is supportive, encouraging, and understanding. Building relationships with those you lead can be done in simple tasks like asking how their weekend was, to more engaging methods like group outings or gifts of appreciation. A key component of motivating others is to know what motivates them. A leader can only feed the internal desire in their followers. Understanding each follower on a personal level will assist in recognizing the individual diversities they bring to the table, and help foster their personal development. Media entrepreneur and motivational speaker Gary Vaynerchuk (2016) expresses that “Your employees should not work as hard as you. It's not their business” (p. 1). This is an example of Kouzes and Posner's (2015) definition of the “model the way” commitment of exemplary leadership (p. 16). Vayerchuk (2014) further urges leaders to be the first in the relationship to provide value and implement the 51:49 rule of giving more than you take. Reflecting on this, I must assess the value of my achievements against my efforts. In short, do I currently put in enough effort to achieve my leadership goals and, if not, how can I improve on this?

There are many assessment tests that claim to determine if a person is leadership-worthy. The Leadership Trait Questionnaire, Skills Inventory, and Myers Briggs Type Indicator (Northouse, 2013), Social Styles model, DISC test, and other assessment tools relate leadership to personality - something you are born with, not a learned behavior. For me, I know this to not be the only method of effective leadership. Leadership has many traits, styles, and variables that can all be effective at different times with different personalities. Not all followers are motivated by the same leadership approach. In the Harvard Business Review's *Leadership that Gets Results*, Daniel Goleman (2000) likens effective leadership to selecting a club from the golf bag in that every situation could require a different club, different approach, and different level of risk. In order to achieve the ability to effortlessly transition between approaches one must have emotional intelligence. By definition, emotional intelligence encompasses one's ability to "perceive, facilitate, understand, and manage emotion" (Northouse, 2013, p. 28). This management allows the user the fluid ability to change between leadership styles to utilize the best tool for the person and situation presented.

Therefore, determining associates and my productivity and personality styles must be a primary effort of every interaction to position my strategies to motivate toward shared visions and goals. Through quick individual personality assessments, I will be better able to provide employees the tools they need to achieve high self-efficacy, while also providing more effective team structures (Williams, n.d.). By knowing the core competency of my team, I can embrace the diverse qualities they bring, and align my leadership styles to adapt to my colleagues and associates and empower others to do the same. The second year of my path toward leadership includes actively employing these techniques to grow competence and confidence in my vision, making adjustments where needed and recognize success in my plan.

By year three I aim to look forward by utilizing the strong grasp on the traits I have implemented in myself to seek for leadership opportunities that allow me to grow. In *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Northouse (2013) details scholar Ralph Stogdill's trait approach to leadership. These traits included a drive for responsibility, persistence in pursuit, risk taking, initiating social situations, self-confidence, accepting of consequences, readiness to absorb personal stress, tolerant of frustrations, the ability to influence others, and a capacity to structure interactions to serve a purpose (Northouse, 2013, p. 21). I feel each of these skills have a role in the concerted application of my five-year plan.

In year four my leadership initiation and persistence in organizational opportunities should be second nature providing added confidence in my ability to take risks to further my reach. This can be achieved in implementing changes within an organization, trying new strategies or taking new positions. This will allow me to not only realize the gains of success, but also give me the assuredness of accepting consequences of failures.

By the fifth year I hope to influence others through my credibility. The ability to convey inspiration and motivation through casual conversation and interactions is an important piece of maintaining any successful organization through the generational cycles that occur. Instilling confidence in others to achieve their own personal leadership is the ultimate goal of a credible, servant, and authentic leader. In five years time I aim to serve others by building a better version of myself within them.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, leaders are impactful people who, over time, have the ability to inspire individuals to become greater than who they are. They have the foresight to encourage and become mentors for personal and professional growth in order to achieve organizational goals.

But even the best leaders start somewhere. Whether their skills are inherent traits of leadership, or they are learned through a growth mindset, developing them is a process involving a mixture of many elements including comprehension, authenticity, self-reflection, forward-thinking, and inspiration. This reflecting on the pursuit of higher education, how the sport management program continues to assist in my goals and aspirations, and planning for the future is an important piece of being a well-rounded, credible leader.

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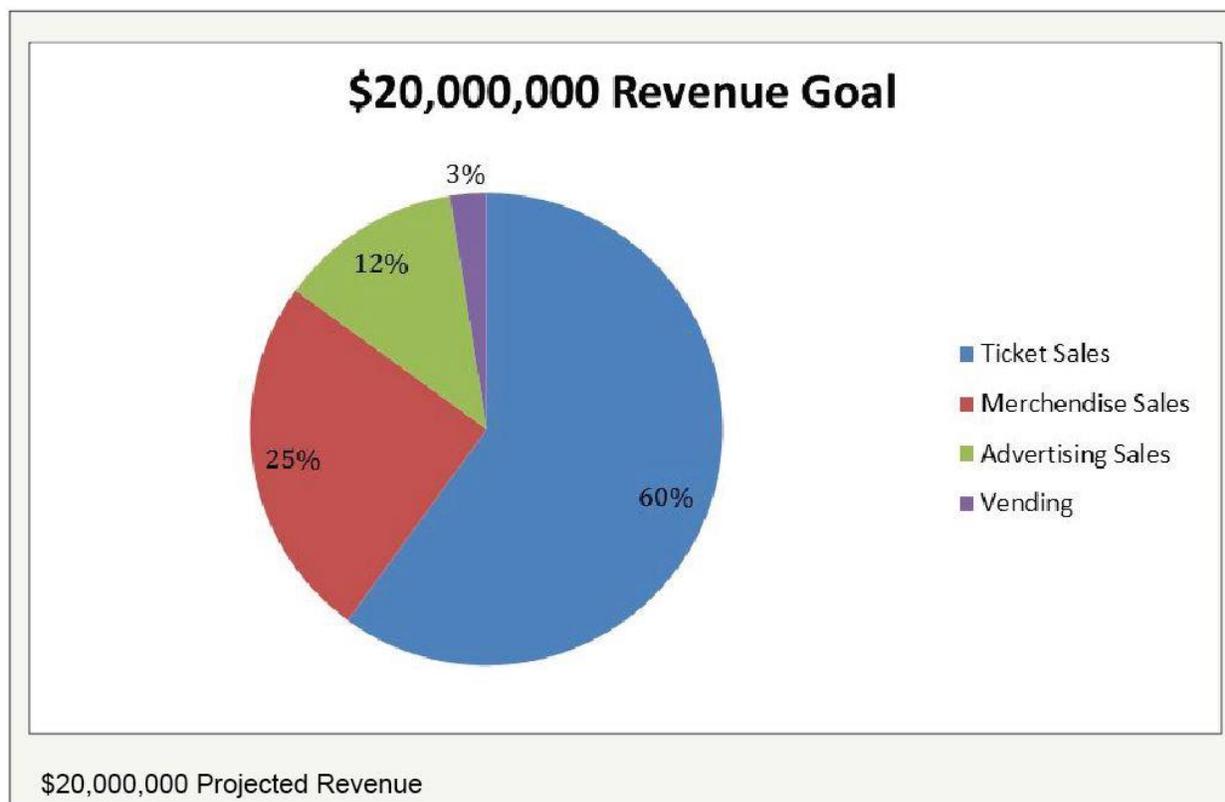
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## Appendix A

Projected revenue of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.



Ticket Sales	\$ 12,000,000.00
Merchandise Sales	\$ 5,000,000.00
Advertising Sales	\$ 2,500,000.00
Vending	\$ 500,000.00

\$20,000,000 Projected Revenue Breakdown

IMAGE © M. DALUM

Appendix B

Budgeted expenses of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.



\$10,000,000 Expense Budget

Facility Rental	\$ 3,000,000.00
Merchandise (COGS)	\$ 1,500,000.00
Vending (Food & Beverage)	\$ 1,000,000.00
Ice Surface Construction & Upkeep	\$ 1,000,000.00
Marketing	\$ 1,000,000.00
Staffing	\$ 700,000.00
Security	\$ 600,000.00
Signage	\$ 500,000.00
Utilities	\$ 400,000.00
Travel	\$ 300,000.00

IMAGE © M. DALUM

\$10,000,000 Expense Budget Breakdown

## Appendix C

## SWOT Analysis of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong fan loyalty.</li> <li>- High fan affluence.</li> <li>- High revenue potential.</li> <li>- Ties to nostalgic hockey memories.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low national fan base among sports fans.</li> <li>- Large learning curve and fast pace for casual viewers.</li> <li>- Lowest diversity ranking amongst top sports.</li> </ul>
	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<b>External</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create new fans by exposing to a larger national audience.</li> <li>- Engage Millennial demographic through social aspects and speed of play.</li> <li>- Incorporate the international audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oversaturation of outdoor hockey games.</li> <li>- Competing New Year's Day sporting events.</li> <li>- The weather.</li> <li>- Declining television viewership.</li> <li>- Declining Millennial sport fan demographic.</li> </ul>

SWOT Analysis Chart IMAGE © M. DALUM

## Appendix D

### Standards of practice assessment of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.

<u>Standards of Practice</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
Critical Weather	Evacuation Plan
Crowd Management	Efficient Ingress/Egress & Signage
Health Risks	First Aid Stations & Announcements
Bodily Injury	Preventative Measures & Awareness
Disorderly Conduct	Alcohol Limitations
Terrorism	Security Measures

Standards of Practice Assessment Tool IMAGE © M. DALUM

## Appendix E

## Risk category and treatment matrix of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.

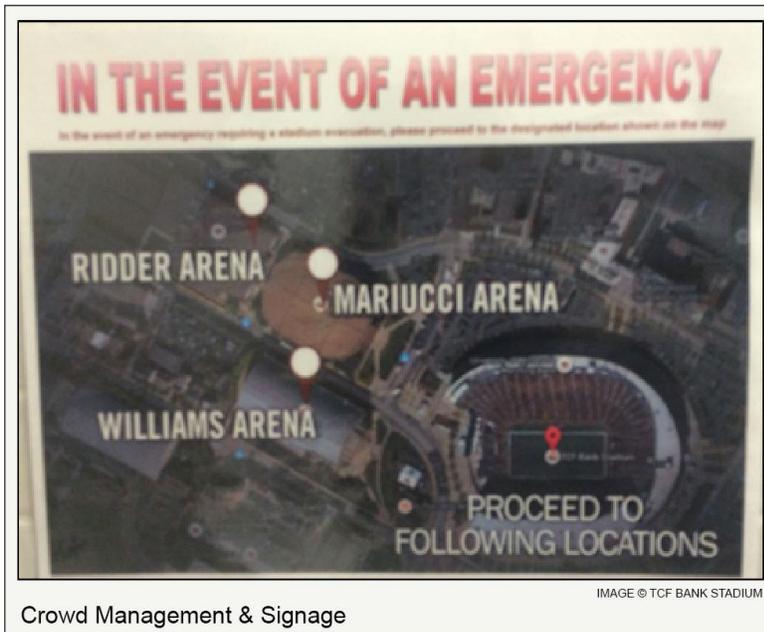
	Catastrophic Loss	Critical Loss	Moderate Loss	Low Loss
High Frequency	None	None	None	<p><b>Crowd Management:</b> Pushing, Shoving, Tripping.</p> <p><b>Treatment:</b> Numerous &amp; Efficient Ingress/Egress &amp; Signage.</p>
Medium Frequency	None	None	None	<p><b>Disorderly Conduct:</b> Physical or Verbal Fighting, Poor Behavior, Theft.</p> <p><b>Treatment:</b> Alcohol Restrictions, Overconsumption Training, &amp; Staff Awareness.</p>
Low Frequency	<p><b>Terrorism:</b> Bombs, Guns, &amp; Other Planned Attacks.</p> <p><b>Treatment:</b> Security Screening, Bag Restrictions, &amp; Stadium Monitoring.</p>	<p><b>Critical Weather:</b> Tornado, Lightning, &amp; Blizzard.</p> <p><b>Treatment:</b> Evacuation Plan, Staff Training, &amp; Signage.</p>	<p><b>Bodily Injury:</b> Slips, Falls, Obstructed Walkways.</p> <p><b>Treatment:</b> Snow Removal, Salt Application, &amp; Staff Awareness.</p>	<p><b>Hypothermia:</b> Weather Related Frost Bite or Skin Irritations.</p> <p><b>Treatment:</b> Announcements &amp; Readily Available First Aid.</p>

Risk Category & Treatment Matrix

IMAGE © M. DALUM

Appendix F

Example of emergency evacuation crowd management signage of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.



Appendix G

Example of crowd management directional signage of the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.

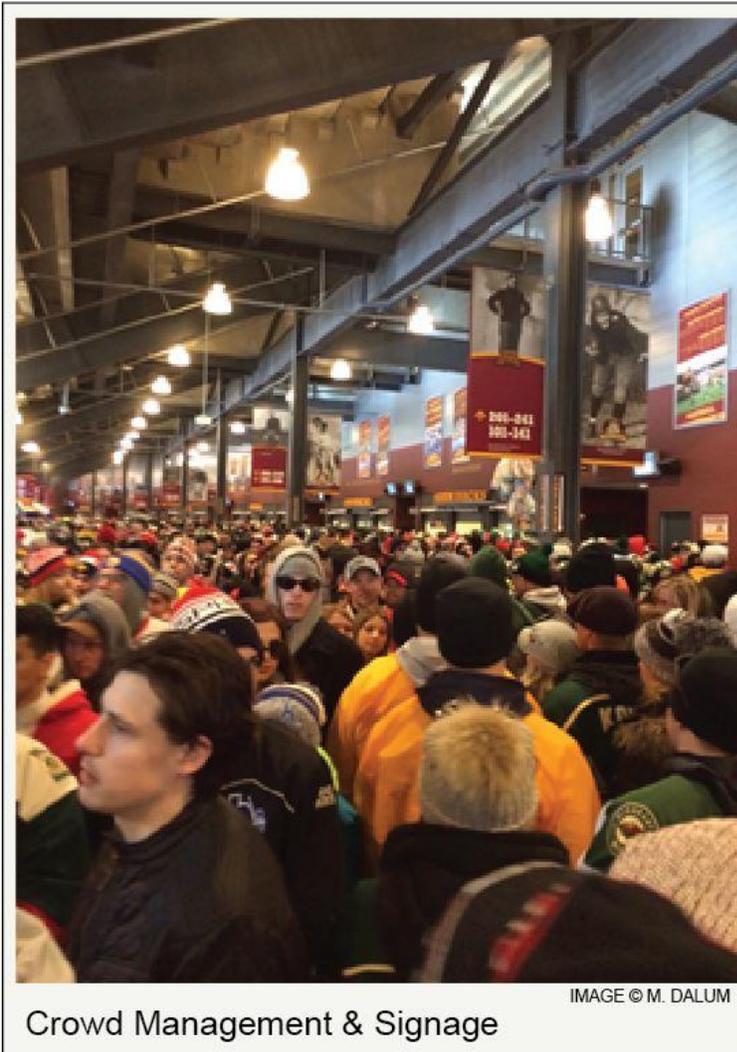
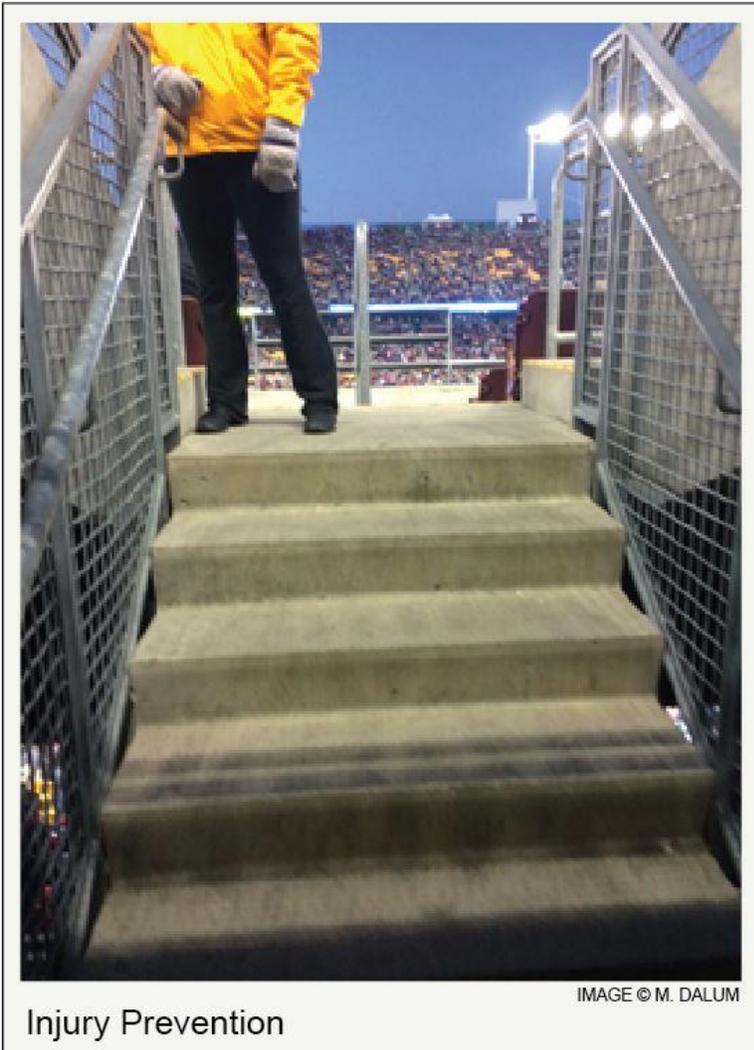


IMAGE © M. DALUM

Crowd Management & Signage

Appendix H

Example of safety measures for injury prevention for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.



Injury Prevention

IMAGE © M. DALUM

Appendix I

Example of first aid and EMS response for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.

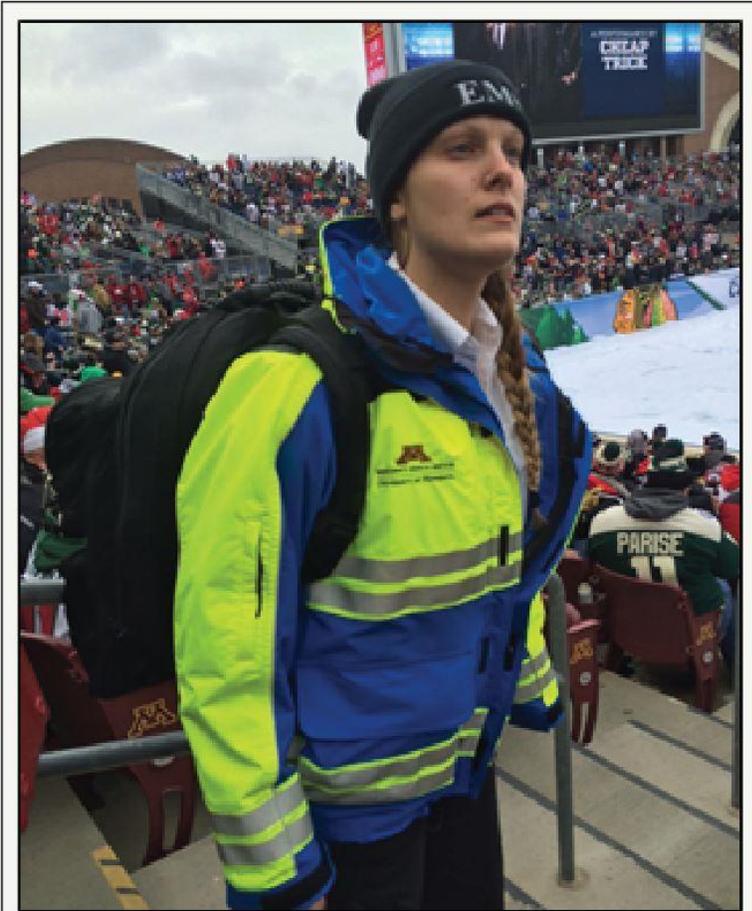


IMAGE © M. DALUM

Injury Response: EMS & First Aid

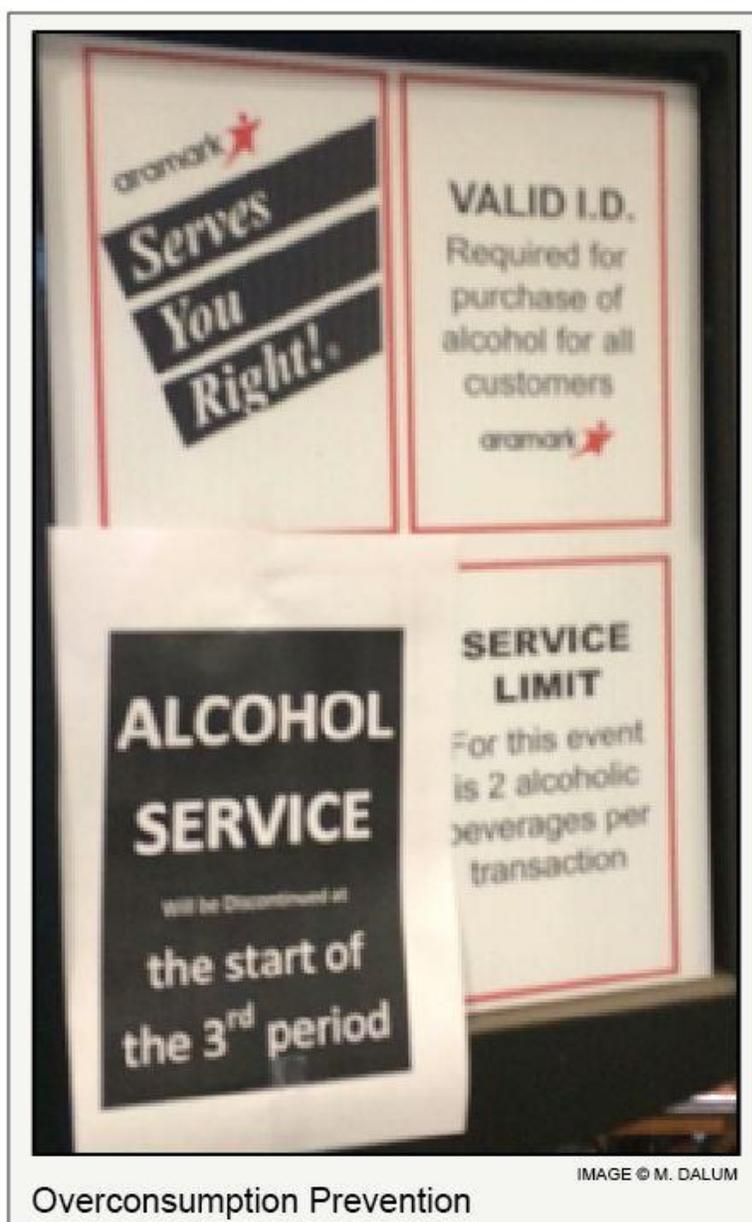
Appendix J

Example of innovative and rapid response to guest needs for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.



## Appendix K

Example of alcohol service restrictions and risk prevention for the NHL Winter Classic.



Appendix L

Example of terrorism prevention and screening for the 2017 NHL Winter Classic.

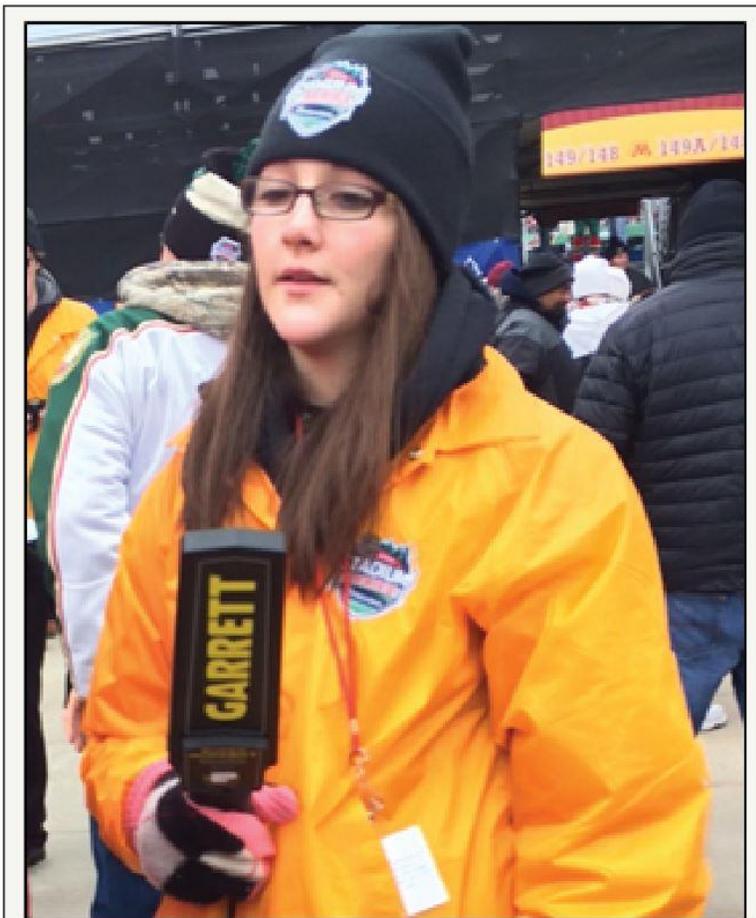


IMAGE © M. DALUM

Security Screening