



Sloan to show Pacers fans: Here's Johnny!

BY BRET MCCORMICK

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Among the ongoing renovations at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis will be a pair of unique test labs working to improve one of the most critical activities that fans do at live sporting events: going to the restroom.

Sloan Valve Company, the 115-year-old, Chicago-based plumbing technology firm known for its toilets, will sponsor the men's and women's restrooms in the Courtside Club, one of Bankers Life Fieldhouse's new premium areas.

"I never could have imagined this type of sponsorship pre-pandemic," said Mel Raines, the Indiana Pacers' executive vice president of corporate communications, community engagement and facility operations. "But it's been a fun partnership with a company we didn't previously have a relationship with, in a new category."

Sloan will have sponsorship signage in the two loos, and beginning this summer, the company will debut novel restroom advancements exclusively at Bankers Life Fieldhouse.

"Facilities like stadiums are big opportunities for us to showcase our technology and innovation," said Sloan President and CEO Jim Allen, whose company is commercial focused. "It doesn't matter too much to us to grow our brand in the consumer space. What's more important is the ability to highlight our latest, greatest innovations, no-touch restrooms."

Populous served as lead architect on the renovations and helped bring the Pacers and Sloan together.

"How do we create this touch-free environment? And that's how the conversation started," said Parthiv Amin, Sloan chief sales and marketing officer.

The multiyear sponsorship was sealed last June, a result of the direct relationship that developed between Allen and Rick Fuson, Pacers Sports & Entertainment president and chief operating officer. Financial terms were not disclosed, nor were details about the novel products that Sloan will install at the arena ahead of the 2021-22 season.

COVID-19 has only increased fans' desires for sports venue restroom improvements. A recent Populous/Navigate survey of sports fans found that more than 75% of respondents found touchless toilet flushing, soap dispensers, sinks, door openers and hand dryers appealing. The

touchless toilet flushing, soap dispensers, sinks, door openers and hand dryers appearing. The same was true for stall availability indicators and automatic toilet seat covers. Sixty-nine percent were interested in an app that mapped out bathroom availability info in a venue.

The plan is to use learnings from the Sloan restrooms to later improve concourse experiences, too. Sloan has long been synonymous with research and development; the company invented the flushometer, which allowed flushing to defy the impact of gravity (think skyscrapers), and pioneered touch-free toilets in the 1980s.

“This will also hopefully help advance how our patrons experience buildings, not just in the NBA but across all the spectrum of sports,” said Adam Stover, Populous senior principal and senior interior designer. “It’s about manufacturers not trying to mimic, but advance and ideate. And that’s what they’re doing, they’re putting a lot of resources to it now.”

The Pacers’ restrooms aren’t Sloan’s first sports sponsorships. In 2015, the company put its name on the Chicago Cubs’ spring training facility in Mesa, Ariz., called Sloan Park, and also has a partnership with the Cubs at Wrigley Field.

“The idea of sponsoring with a sports team is a little unusual,” said Allen. “It’s been really successful, albeit out of the norm for regular sports sponsorships.”



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