

ISLAND SPORTS/MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Economy taking a bite out of Yankee suite sales

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Selling suites may not be so sweet a business for the New York Yankees in these tough economic times.

Seven luxury boxes down the foul lines priced at \$600,000 remain available for the 2009 season, the first at the new Yankee Stadium. The team still had seven available in August, too.

"There's no getting away from the fact that the world is different than it was, so traffic slows," chief operating officer Lon Tost said yesterday. "So you don't have as many people banging on the door. You may only have two people."

Tost said in August that 44 of 50 suites priced at \$600,000 to \$850,000 had been committed, and that the \$600,000 and \$850,000 suites had sold out.

"We're entertaining proposals from different folks," he said. "I'm not going to put them in the social column until somebody sends me an e-mail and says, 'Done.' It's so hard to say close when you get attorneys involved and you start fighting over terms, and you don't want to change terms."

He said in August that 3,500 of the 4,300 premium seats had been sold, including the \$500-\$2,500 per-game tickets near home plate in the first nine rows of 25 sections ringing home plate.

Speaking after a news conference to announce a technology agreement with Cisco

Systems Inc., Tost didn't have an updated figure on premium seats and said it was too early to determine how well season-ticket sales were going for the \$1.3 billion ballpark.

"We can see that the economy is affecting the traffic that is coming around," he said. "Listen, nobody can avoid it. We recognize it. You wake up in the morning and you see it. So we're trying to work with our fan base and understand what their needs are."

He also said the pace of business deals had been impacted by the economic downturn. New York has been working on completing an agreement with Bank of America.

"Things are slow to come to fruition, but they're getting there," Tost said.

The Yankees hope to move into the new ballpark on Jan. 16 or 23. The Mets began operating from their new Citi Field offices on Sept. 22.

Tost said construction was about 12½ days ahead of schedule, that interior work such as cabinetry and carpeting was under way and that the new Metro-North railroad station outside the stadium should be open by the third home stand, which starts May 15. The ballpark's formal opening is April 16 against Cleveland.

Minor demolition of the old Yankee Stadium, which opened in 1923, will begin in January, but the substantive

dismantling of the House that Ruth Built won't start until midsummer.

The ballpark's owner, New York City, still hasn't reached an agreement with the team on selling off memorabilia from the stadium. "We're negotiating," Tost said. "They have views and we have views. And they have attorneys and we have attorneys. We'll get it done."

Yankees general partner Hal Steinbrenner, appearing with Tost, talked generally about the Yankees' free-agent plans. New York is focused on starting pitching, with CC Sabathia likely the No. 1 topic.

"We're going to figure everything out by Friday," Steinbrenner said, referring to the first day free agents can negotiate with all teams. "Everything has been discussed. We know, I think, at this point what our weaknesses are, and we have a pretty good idea of what's out there now."

Like their father, brothers Hal and Hank Steinbrenner figure to be involved in free-agent recruitment. Hal said he had spoken with agent Scott Boras last offseason.

"There's no doubt Hank and I need to get out there and spend some time with some of the agents," Hal Steinbrenner said. New York figures to have another \$200 million-plus payroll. "We're going to pursue the market aggressively as we do every year. The philosophy has not changed."



Outside Rab's Country Lanes yesterday in Dongan Hills, the corner of Delaware Avenue and Hylan Boulevard was rechristened "Rab Wilkinsons Way." In memory of the community activist and bowling proprietor. Unveiling the new street sign, front row from left, are wife Dee, brother Ed and, in back, sons Frank, Tom and Anthony Wilkinsons.

A sign of affection for a true gentleman

Rab Wilkinsons' memory is honored as street outside his bowling center is named for him

By MICHAEL ANDERSON
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

The kindness and generosity Rab Wilkinsons displayed during his life received fitting tribute yesterday as more than 100 people crowded onto the corner of Delaware Avenue and Hylan Boulevard in Dongan Hills for a street renaming dedication.

"Rab Wilkinsons Way," not coincidentally, is the same corner where the Rab's Country Lanes bowling center is located. The street was dedicated to many family members, friends and associates looked on. The sign was unveiled by Rab's widow, Dolores (Dee), his three sons, Anthony, Tom and Frank, and brother, Ed.

"The turnout was very unexpected. People took days off to come. Not everybody had the day off," said Dee Wilkinsons. "Right now it's a little littered, but it just reminds me how wonderful

my family is and how wonderful he was."

While Rab was mostly known for his bowling prowess, the community at large also lost a key figure when Wilkinsons passed away last February.

Wilkinsons was a long-time member of the South Shore Rotary Club and contributed to numerous charitable organizations through the years such as the Staten Island Children's Campaign, the Staten Island Sept. 11 Fund, the Multiple Sclerosis Walk, the Deborah League of Staten Island, the Staten Island Council of Boy Scouts and Rainbow's Hope.

"Growing up, we did so many charity events together for Rainbow's Hope, for the American Cancer Society, for so many organizations on the island and national," said Rab's oldest son, Anthony. "He never said no to anybody. He would give food, whatever it was. He did anything he could to give back. I think that's why people respected him."

Longtime Country Lanes employee Vicky Fischetti wrote in March to Councilman Jim Oddo (R-Mid-

land) detailing Wilkinsons' bio in hopes of getting the street renamed and the Wilkinsons family was notified in mid-October about the ceremony. It also seemed fitting that the renaming took place on Veterans' Day since Rab served in France and Germany with the U.S. Army from 1961-1965.

"We'll be here for a long time and we'll keep the place as best we can. And I don't want anyone to forget Rab that fast. I want them to remember him forever," said Dee. "I really believe that people really, really respected and loved my husband. He was the best. The best father. The best proprietor. The best husband. There's nobody like him."

"To be honest, this is only the second time I've been at the bowling alley since he passed away because it's a very overwhelming feeling," said Anthony. "But when I saw the sign, I had a chill. I just know that he's beaming and very proud wherever he is."

The ceremonial street renaming was sponsored by Oddo and although he was unable to attend, a representative from his office was on hand for the festivities.

Lincecum wins NL Cy Young

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Tim Lincecum hung up the phone after learning the news he'd been waiting more than a month to hear.

"My reaction was 'Whoa!'" the newly crowned NL Cy Young Award winner boomed for a news conference bigger than any the San Francisco Giants had seen since the days of home run king Barry Bonds.

"I literally yelled at a couple times after I got off the phone, so it was pretty nice."

Back in spring training, Lincecum and Giants closer Brian Wilson, traded about this day — how they both wanted to win a Cy Young.

Neither could have expected it now — not this. Lincecum just finished his first full major league season two weeks ago, and he was just known for his beaming and very proud wherever he is. He was once mistaken for a bat boy by ballpark security when he was called up last year. Teammates tease him with the nickname "Francisco" — a moniker Lincecum said he doesn't dare mention in public.



San Francisco's Cy Young Award winner Tim Lincecum went 18-5 with a 2.62 ERA.

137 points in balloting by the National Writers' Association of America. Brandon Webb of the Arizona Diamondbacks got four first-place votes and finished second with 71 points.

"It was more of like, 'really,'" Lincecum said of winning. "I was hoping I'd be in there in the mix."

Listed at 5-foot-11 and 160 pounds, Lincecum defied detractors — and the laws of physics — by overpowering baseball's best hitters.

Lincecum went 18-5 with a 2.62 ERA and a major-league record 265 strikeouts, remarkable numbers for a fourth-place club that finished 77-85. Putting up those numbers on a struggling team certainly helped his cause.

Steve Carlton is the lone Cy Young winner to pitch for a worse club. The Hall of Famer was on with a 1.97 ERA for the 1973 Philadelphia Phillies, who went 59-97.

ROUNDUP

Youth basketball: Hill JV wins

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Robert Rossiter and Vincent Mastropolo combined for 28 points as St. Joseph Hill defeated Blessed Sacrament 42-34 in Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) action.

Victoria Romano and Gabriella Rubin combined for 23 points as St. Joseph St. Thomas defeated Our Lady Help of Christians 30-15 in JV action.

YOUTH BASEBALL

Vipers gain series

Matt Rudekness (10 Ks) tossed a one-hitter and Anthony Feder had two hits and three RBIs as the Vipers defeated the Clippers 5-1 in the Staten Island United States Legion Series Minor quarterfinals.

Jon Carbone and Steve Marston had two hits and two RBIs as the Stammers 5-7 in the Cal Eggen Fall Ball 9-10s playoffs.

Terrence Mulligan (four hits, one K) and Chris Meranda (two hits, four RBIs) helped the Robert Carbone Rangers win the Senior Minor Elite women's bracket final with a 9-4 triumph over the Scorpions.

001: Cal Eggen Fall Ball (legendary series, September 7) St. Joseph's Vipers 5, St. Thomas 1, St. Joseph's Vipers 1, St. Thomas 1.

BASKETBALL

Ground Level rises

Rab Mulligan and Rab Meranz combined for 50 points in Ground Level Pub 'n' Grub's 88-74 victory over Trifolium in CYO Men's Unlimited league action.

Twins Window Cleaning got 22 points apiece from Paul Cordano and Mike Kufens in a 101-85 victory over the Run Ramblers.

Fury win

Wina Brennan scored the winning goal and Danielle Alexandria also tallied as the Staten Island United Fury clinched second place with a 2-1 MUSA Soccer League girls' under-14 Premier division triumph over the Wall Lizards. Middlefield Krista Sporno also played a solid game for the Fury.

YOUTH SOCCER

PRICE FROM PAGE B1

Siller Foundation launches 'Operation Support'

American heroes at the Hilton. The kids just back from Iraq and Afghanistan. The graying vets from Vietnam and Korea. Ladina and 91-year-old Angie Strom, who cranked up a field telephone for George Patton in North Africa. Roger Acker, who walked out of a German prisoner-of-war camp after the Battle of the Bulge. All the way back to Al Kongsle, who was aboard the St. Louis, a light cruiser, when the ship blasted to fall on Pearl Harbor.

There's been plenty said, and written, about how most Americans haven't been asked to share in the sacrifice of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We don't see much of the funerals, or the kids coming home maimed and worse, thanks to an administration that doesn't trust the public to see the price being paid by its all-volunteer military.

NBC News ran a feature, just the other day, about the more public outpouring in Canada, where firemen, Boy Scouts and ordinary citizens regularly line a highway in Ontario to salute every fallen hero's funeral procession from the airport even in the dead of winter.

"We don't mind," one of the firemen in Cobourg, Ontario, told NBC. "It's the least we can do."

That was the prevailing attitude at the Hilton, at the close of a day when Operation Support took over all four of the island's golf courses.

"There are 750 kids on Staten Island who have mothers or fathers deployed in the military," Frank Siller told a crowd of his neighbors.

"It's our responsibility to do whatever we can to take care of their kids."

Mostly, he said, the Sillers were following the same dic-

tate that led to the formation of the Let Us Do Good Foundation, which honors their brother, a fireman who ran through the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel on Sept. 11, 2001, and died when the Twin Towers came down.

"What would Stephen do?" When he began to investigate ways to help soldiers and their families, Frank Siller found there were two organizations — Staten Island Project Homefront, and the Staten Island Supports Our Soldiers Resource Center — already doing a lot of the heavy lifting.

"A lot of it's obvious to the people who need it," he says. "But sometimes we forget."

There were no golf outings to support the troops when Don Giovannazzo got home from Vietnam, where he was a combat medic, trying to patch mangled bodies in the chaos of rice paddies

and on the bloody decks of helicopters.

"They didn't throw any dinners for us," Giovannazzo said.

But here he was, too, part of the crowd at the Hilton when his son Carmine's face came up on a video screen alongside the Academy Award nomination that made the younger Giovannazzo a star.

The night was young when Siller and emcee Larry Arran introduced the old vets, the room rising to give each one a standing ovation, the start of what Gary Siller hope will be part of a grass-roots movement of Americans determined to let a new generation of veterans know they're not alone.

As the firefighter in Cobourg said, it's the least we can do.