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Oct14

[Joe](#)

[7,421 fans to a Tiger hockey game? How far we have come in such a short time](#)

Wow! That's really all that needs to be said about the crowd of 7,421 fans who showed up to see the Tiger [men's hockey team battle Colgate](#) at Blue Cross Arena on Saturday during Brick City Homecoming and Family Weekend. Many people will tell you, including myself, that the number was low—it was closer to and maybe north of 8,000 fans. What an atmosphere! The one thing that was noticeable all week, not just on campus, was the buzz surrounding this game. I went to the *Democrat and Chronicle* to drop off a handful of media guides to the sports department on Friday afternoon, and ended up having a nice conversation with the man at the front desk, telling me how excited he was to be going to the game. On Friday morning, the game received publicity on The Break Room on 96.5 WCMF.

The one question I have after this weekend's support, and lack thereof for the other winter professional teams in the area, is have we become the top draw? The American Hockey League's Rochester Americans, who have been around since 1956, drew 4,124 fans for their home opener at Blue Cross Arena on Oct. 3, then drew crowds of 2,213 on Oct. 9 (the night before we played there), and 2,120 on Oct. 12. The Rochester Razorsharks, the reigning Premier Basketball League Champions, averaged around 4,000 fans per game last season, but don't begin their season until January. I also have heard through the grapevine that those numbers are skewed tremendously by the amount of complimentary tickets given away.

A few people asked me on Sunday how many free seats RIT gave away for the game on Saturday. They were stunned when I told them that none were given away to my knowledge.

It's amazing what a few years of good hockey at the Division I level will do. When we moved to Division I in 2005, we were known within the core RIT community (Corner Crew, some students/faculty/staff, but little community). Now, it seems like the buzz from the Rochester community has increased by leaps and bounds. With affordable ticket prices, great hockey, free parking, and several restaurants within two miles from the arena, it has become a great way for friends or families to spend a night out.

Another thing I was also told by a few folks, and actually caught a quick glimpse of before the exhibition game at Ritter Arena 10 days ago, was the amount of tailgating going on before each contest. It's starting to be more like a football atmosphere with every passing season. Also, this was the first time in my six years at RIT that it looked like some sort of homecoming weekend, both on campus and off.

Now, I know we would probably never average 7,500 fans per home game, or even 5,000 playing at Blue Cross Arena, but I will safely say that we have outgrown Ritter Arena. I have heard more than a few people say that they refuse to go, especially on Fridays because the arena gets too packed, too fast and there are never any seats to be had after 6:30 for 7:05 start. Last year, we sold out more than a few games days in advance.

A new arena would be tremendous, with a seating capacity of about 4,000 people at the most. That way, you keep it intimate and close to the action, so the place gets loud, just like Ritter Arena. Then, throw in modern amenities, such as an state of the art press box (totally selfish for the Sports Information staff), and a host of luxury boxes, and we would be set. Now, all we need is some anonymous donor to fork over \$25-30 million and we will be good to go. The wheels are motion, now we just need the dough.



Large view of crowd at Blue Cross Arena, 10-10-2009

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1. [Gretchen](#)
Oct14

Golisano Arena anyone?

2. [John](#)
Oct14

Great blog, Joe. The energy at the Blue Cross was electric. Can't wait for next year.

3. [David Page](#)
Oct14

Home Ice on campus is a plus More seating a necessity!
The Tiger says: ROAR! - It's good for your stripes !!!

4. [Jason](#)
Oct14

Tailgating? Count me in, when and where?

5. [Andy B](#)
Oct14

To all who are interested in tailgating

Where: D-Lot

When: Before every home game

Get a grill, some friends and some food and join us in D-Lot. WITR does live broadcasts from tailgating and plays music, there were over 50 student plus many more families at the last tailgate and Dr. Destler tailgated with us as well!!!

It's an awesome time so come on out!

For more info check us out on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#group.php?gid=39424661171&ref=ts>

6. [Am Lager](#)
Oct15

Wipe the Insurance Hacks off the front of the War Memorial, put Golisano's name up there, and then see if The Tigers really can consistently draw the kind of crowds that the Amers drew back in the '90s. THAT would get The Money man's attention, maybe he'd bring the Amers back into the Sabres family where they belong, and THEN we can talk about building that new ice at RTI.

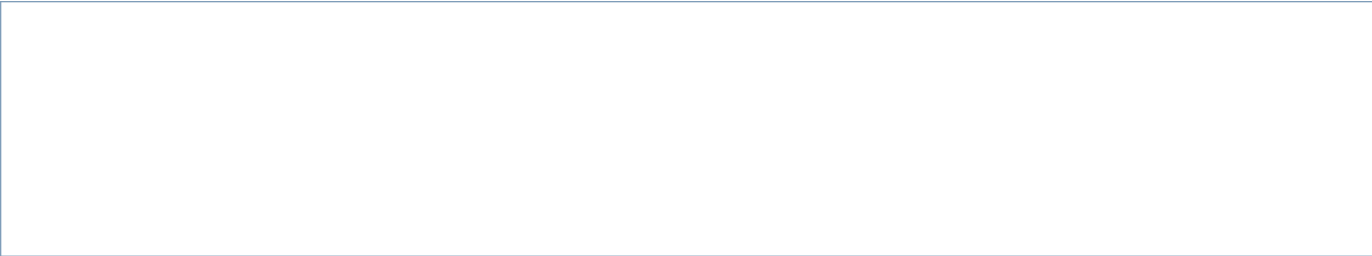
7. [Paul Stella](#)
Oct15

Some really good insights, Joe! Certainly one reason why the Amers no longer draw (in addition to bad hockey) is the death of their affiliation with the Buffalo Sabres. How cool it was to watch Ryan Miller, Derek Roy and Jason Pominville, just to name a few, on their way to NHL stardom. Can't say I have much interest in following the progress of the future Florida Panthers.

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