

FINELY TUNED

CFL Argonauts join Toronto FC in upgraded BMO Field CAN\$120m two-phase project. Feature writer, Steve Traiman, gets insight from team owner, MLSE, and the practice behind the design, Gensler Architects.

When Major League Soccer's Toronto FC (TFC) defeated Dallas FC 1-0 in its May 7 home opener with a 30,000-plus sellout at the 'new' BMO Field, it was a special night for fans, players and team owner **Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (MLSE)**.

"It's an emotional night, coming back home," TFC head coach Greg Vanney said. *"When the stadium is in full voice, singing*



Opening night fireworks celebrate new BMO Field



Fans enter new BMO Field for home opener
All photos courtesy: MLSE/Gensler Architects



BMO FIELD STADIUM

Fact File and Project Team

Location	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Owner	Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (MLSE)
Opening Date	Phase 2, May 2016
Construction Cost	CAN\$120m renovation/expansion
Major Tenants	MLS Toronto FC, CFL Toronto Argonauts (2016)
Architect	Gensler
Construction Manager	PCL Construction
Owner's Representative	ICON Venue Group
Structural Engineer	Entuitive and Thornton Tomasetti
Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing	H.H. Angus & Associates Ltd and M-E Engineers
IT/Lighting	M-E Engineers and Musco Lighting
Civil Engineer	Morrison Hershfield Corp.
Steel Fabricator	Canam-Heavy
Code	Aon Risk Solutions
Seating	Seda
A/V & Communications	WJHW
F&B Concessionaire	William Caruso & Associates

Amenities

Phase 2 includes a new full-size canopy for all seats except the North End; a new sound and lighting system. Phase 1, completed May 2015, included an additional 8,400 seats, taking capacity to 30,000 (expandable to 40,000); 12 new executive suites; two party suites and a loge box; a full service kitchen; a new 230-capacity West Grandstand Tunnel Club and 420-capacity East Grandstand BMO Club, Rogers Club expansion to 750 patrons, new North End videoboard and South End upper concourse level.

the national anthem ... I'm not Canadian, but I was so proud of the city and our fans for that moment. It brings a tear to my eye every time they're in full voice; it's so impressive."

Bob Hunter, MLSE Chief Project Development Officer, with the company 18 years, told PS&AM: "I've seen a lot of changes since MLSE was created – including highlights when we sold the old Maple Leaf Gardens – home of our NHL Maple Leafs, bought the NBA Raptors and moved into our new Air Canada Centre headquarters. We have built quite a successful conglomerate and then acquired the expansion TFC for the 2007 season in our original BMO Field.

"Out of the gate with TFC we had an overwhelmingly enthusiastic and

quite decent fan base. Then President Tim Leiweke believed we had a great opportunity to grow soccer in this marketplace – his mantra was 'if we build more seats, they will come'. He signed significant European designated players to boost the team. The original stadium was built for CAN\$60m, relatively low for an MLS stadium, and we had also paid a CAN\$10m franchise fee. It was one of the league's newer designated soccer buildings but quickly became the 'poor cousin' with new venues in Colorado, Red Bull in New Jersey, and others.

"We wanted to upgrade and build-in more fan amenities. We did a fair amount of research, visiting other newer stadiums. It came across loud and clear there was a market for

premium amenities – premium clubs, better suites with high-end seating and more corporate entertaining."

PHASE 1

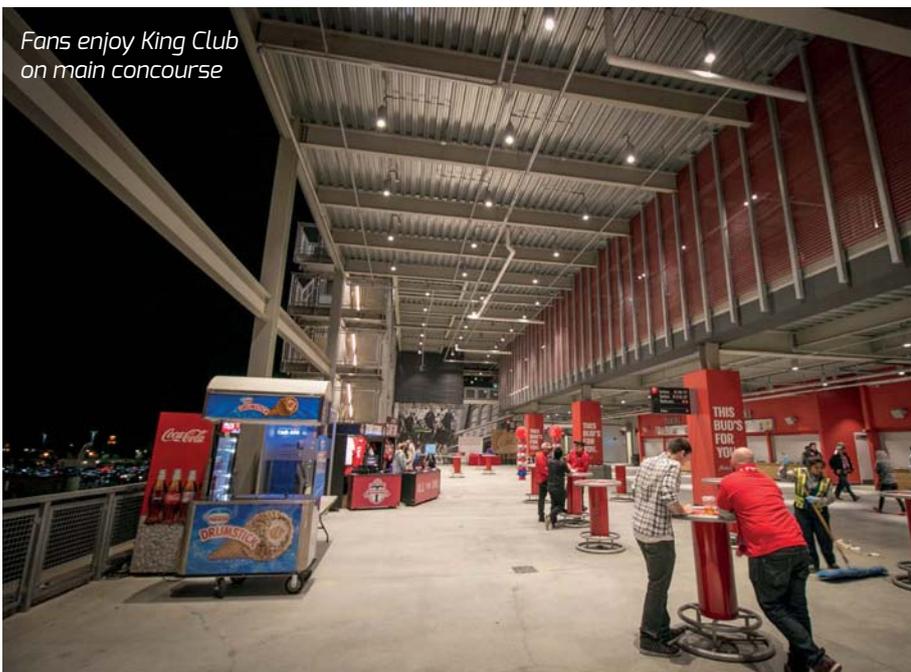
Hunter continued: "Phase 1 completed last May and included an additional 8,400 seats to 30,000 – expandable to 40,000 for the CFL Grey Cup championship we will host November 27; 12 new executive suites; two party suites and a loge box; a full service kitchen; new 230-capacity West Grandstand Tunnel Club and a >>>



Two new Party Suites welcome fans



Lounge area in new west grandstand Tunnel Club



Fans enjoy King Club on main concourse

420-capacity East Grandstand BMO Club, with Rogers Club expansion to 750 patrons; a new North End high-definition videoboard and a new South End upper concourse level.

NEW CANOPY & PITCH

“The new canopy that welcomed fans this year covers all seats except the north end, and we’ve also upgraded with a new sound system and new lighting. The canopy is lighted from below so it’s a shining beacon from the nearby expressway. When the north stand was removed late last year to accommodate a CFL end zone, there was speculation about capacity for soccer. TFC capacity remains at 30,000 while the Argos will seat 27,000 for regular season games

“Conversion of the stadium for the Argos includes a new 10,000sqft locker room, and we reconfigured other dressing rooms to accommodate a larger visiting football squad.

“Our TFC fans were not happy with sharing the field with the football team but we will convince them and the proof will be in the pudding this year. We’re taking every precaution to maintain the standard we’d expect for TFC.”

Two reserve fields were grown in nearby Mount Hope, with one brought in to replace the current surface several months ago. By maintaining a secondary pitch outside the city, grounds crews can more easily fix portions of the pitch if necessary between CFL and MLS dates.

Speaking in relation to the project and design team on the job, Hunter advised:

“Gensler Architects were new for us on the two-phase program, and did an excellent job in putting a fine project team together with PCL Construction. We were very pleased as they had to cope with our weather, ‘just in time’ steel and other deliveries. Our biggest challenge was the MLS schedule, as last year more higher-end finishes were involved. This year we lucked out with the weather despite more structural steel for the canopy.

“Our fans were very hungry as due to weather-related construction delays, TFC was away for the first eight home games. We had the team in for a couple of visits, and our players were very ecstatic about the improvements.”

GENSLER IN FOCUS

BMO Field Project Architect Ryan Whitacre has been with **Gensler SPORTS'** Los Angeles office for the past five years and is the group's sustainability leader.

Canam-Heavy, the **Canam Group** division that specialises in large complex projects, worked with construction manager **PCL Constructors Canada Inc.** to construct a partial roof over **BMO Field** – home of **Major League Soccer (MLS)** team **Toronto FC** and of the **Canadian Football League's Toronto Argonauts** starting in July 2016.

Canam-Heavy's services on Phase II of the BMO Field expansion project included design-assist, detailing and project management services, building information modelling (BIM), as well as the fabrication of 3,600 tons of steel roof components. BMO Field's three new roof canopies (the largest of which measures 435ft-long by 190ft-wide) help support extended facility use in inclement weather and reestablish the presence and identity of the new BMO Field.

Canam-Heavy and its trusted partners managed a complex, three-canopy roof erection, and completed fabrication 3 weeks early due to successful planning and execution.

www.canamheavy.com

The practice boasts many other recent sports projects, including **Los Angeles FC's** new **MLS Stadium** project and Philadelphia's **Lincoln Financial Field** additions for the **NFL Eagles**, among others.

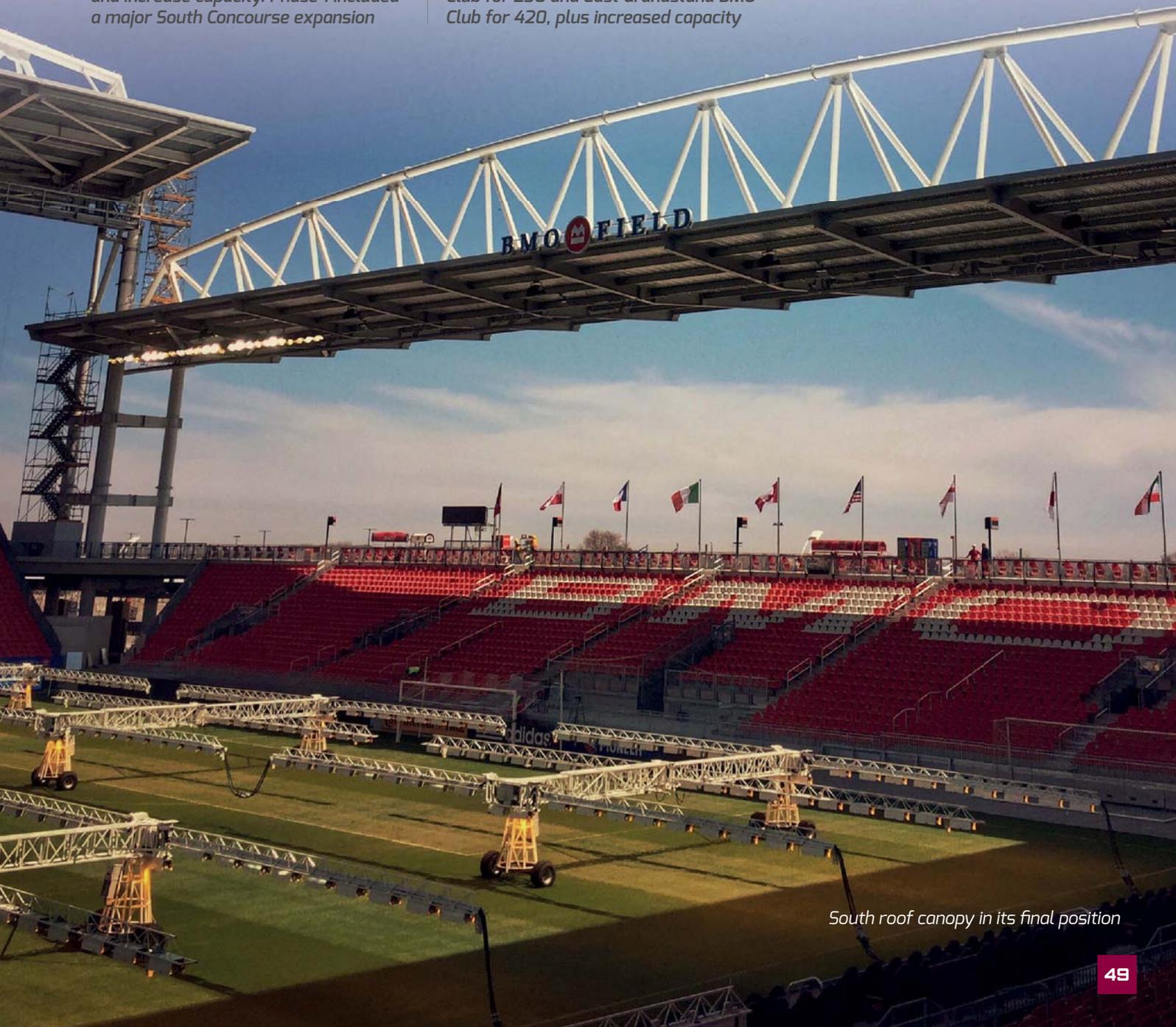
Whitacre commented: *“Originally, MLSE's key parameters were to really work on enhancing revenue streams and increase capacity. Phase 1 included a major South Concourse expansion*

as a new site for portable food and beverage, and merchandise stands. It was more of a fan amenity to provide a seamless move between east and west sides of the stadium.

“We also focused on expanding high-end amenities. These included a dozen new VIP suites, two large party suites and a loge box, a new West Grandstand Tunnel Club for 230 and East Grandstand BMO Club for 420, plus increased capacity

to 750 for the Rogers Club. A new full service kitchen was added to service the new amenities.

“The new roof canopy was much more about creating a sense of a ‘proper football’ stadium like the UK Premier League venues. The steel canopy that covers most patrons creates a true soccer atmosphere and keeps fan noise >>



South roof canopy in its final position

« in. The May 7 opening night victory was truly raucous and fans had a great time. “The canopy became an armature for a new distributed sound system from WJHW and Westbury, with new lighting by ME Engineers using a Musco metal Halite system, with all refurbished and re-lamped older fixtures. House and emergency lighting are all energy-saving LED lamps.”

ADJUSTMENTS FOR ARGOS & CONSTRUCTING THE CANOPY

In terms of developing space for the stadium’s latest addition, the CFL Argonauts, Whitacre said: “For the on again, off again, finally on again deal in March 2015 with the CFL Argonauts, we had reserved open space for a new 10,000sqft home team locker room. We had to adjust the field dimensions with the extents of the natural grass surface the same except for adding 8ft at the north end zone. The transition between the natural grass and the artificial turf is at the goal line.

“The canopy is made of surface steel metal decking and a single-ply roof membrane. This is white and lit up at night for a glowing beacon for the stadium with great visibility from the nearby freeway. The overall look is a real tribute to the close relationship

between PCL Construction and Canam Steel to erect the new canopy structure in a tough environment.

“Our biggest problem was ‘just in time’. The scale of work in Phase 1 should have taken 12 months but we only had 7, from the end of the 2014 season to the 2015 opening game. For Phase 2 we had more time to plan out and get things coordinated before canopy construction began.

“Teamwork was vital to get things done on time and on budget, combining our sports expertise in L.A. and a local presence in Toronto, building a close relationship with ICON Venue Group and PCL. The weather was not helpful in the record ‘snow winter’ of 2014-15 but this year was much better for heavy steel canopy lifting.

“Overall, MLSE seemed to be very pleased with how everything came together – they knew it was a work in progress but would bring more fans with the many new amenities. The canopy provides people with the idea of coming to the game despite inclement weather. Coupled with TFC doing better, the new BMO Field is really starting to gain traction with fans who might have been ‘on the fence’. With MLSE, we’re building a really great new presence for the city that has really helped the soccer club and will help the Argos as well.”

ICON VENUE GROUP

For ICON Venue Group, Dan Vaillant, Senior Vice President and Project Executive, added: “This project is nothing short of incredible. MLSE had a grand vision for BMO Field and we were honoured to serve as their Owner’s Representative in bringing that vision to reality. Renovation projects are never easy and we were very fortunate to have a fantastic group of project partners that really pulled together despite aggressive time schedules, inclement weather and regularly-scheduled events at the stadium and Exhibition Place.

“Over the course of two winter off-seasons, BMO Field has been transformed into a world-class venue that will create an entirely new experience for the fans of TFC and the Argonauts in a most impressive way. I have no doubt that this project will be a case study for success in professional sports stadium renovations.”

MLSE’s Bob Hunter noted with enthusiasm: “Overall fan, team and sponsor response has been amazing, with five opening sell-outs. With BMO Field right off the main freeway, it’s been quite a feat as fans have watched it being built, with the new lighted roof quite an architectural attraction for many years to come.” ■



TFC team entry tunnel to field