

Sports Dome will rise again this month



By Brock Weir

After lying in ruins following a freak early May windstorm earlier this year, the Aurora Sports Dome is set to rise again.

Terry Redvers, owner of the Aurora Sports Dome on Industrial Parkway North, tells *The Auroran* that the dome is ready, the groundwork is largely done, and they hope to have it up and running as early as next week.

'Our mandate is to get it up by October 1 because that is when the indoor soccer season really starts,' Mr. Redvers told *The Auroran* last week. 'It should be ready to go up in about two weeks. It takes about a week to put the bubble up and we're hoping to have it all ready in the third week of September. It will be a brand new bubble with brand-new LED lighting.'

In the months since the wind felled the bubble, less than an hour before soccer players were due to arrive for a game, Mr. Redvers says he and his team have had time to fully assess the situation.

'Some of the domes, when they are wide and long like what our dome is, they need cables going over the top,' he says. 'These [previous] cables were really malfunctioning. Four of them really tore out of the ground and they are supposed to withstand a lot more pressure than what was put on them. The wind was a factor, but the main factor was the cables coming out of the ground and that allowed the bubble to roam freely and it split. The new bubble is ready to go, but we had to replace the anchors and we had to have tests done to make sure everything is proper.'

Terry Redvers' son Trevor was inside the dome when the wind hit this past spring. He sent everyone home as the winds picked up and was performing a perimeter check to make sure all emergency exits were closed snugly and then, in his words, the dome 'just popped.'

New entrances will figure in the design of the new bubble, says Terry.

'When you go into the bubble, you either have a double door system because of the pressure, or you have revolving doors,' he says. 'When I put the bubble in years ago, the doors that we had were too small. People were taking their golf clubs in and their clubs would be scrunched in the door. We're now building a new proper-size revolving door, so I think people will be delighted when they see the result and I think it will be fantastic.'

Past the doors, the new bubble will feature much of the same amenities that were in there before. There will be three fields going the length of the dome, which will accommodate a variety of sports, ranging from soccer to two simultaneous games of slo-pitch softball.

Once they are fully back up and running, Mr. Redvers says he would like to make inroads in kids and after school programming throughout the fall and winter.

'Kids in school don't get enough exercise, we know that, the teachers know that, the whole world knows that,' he says, noting he has yet to get full support from the local school boards on initiatives such as these. 'We have never had support from the school boards, yet I am tempted to go to parent-teacher nights and say, 'this dome is great for your kids to get some exercise instead of going home to sit on the computer.''

When the dome fell, the owners said the silver lining was it happened when it did as May was just at the end of their busy season.

Had it happened in the middle of the fall, however, it would have resulted in a serious hit to business. As it happens, the biggest hit was felt in the Town's Parks and Recreation Department, says Mr. Redvers.

?The Town has more time in the dome in the summer than we do, and it was part of our deal,? he says. ?I wish more people knew that because we get such bad press because everyone thinks we're the big, bad entrepreneurs. We're not. This has impacted us a little bit, but not as much as if it had gone down in November. Then it would have been a drastic case of business interruption.?