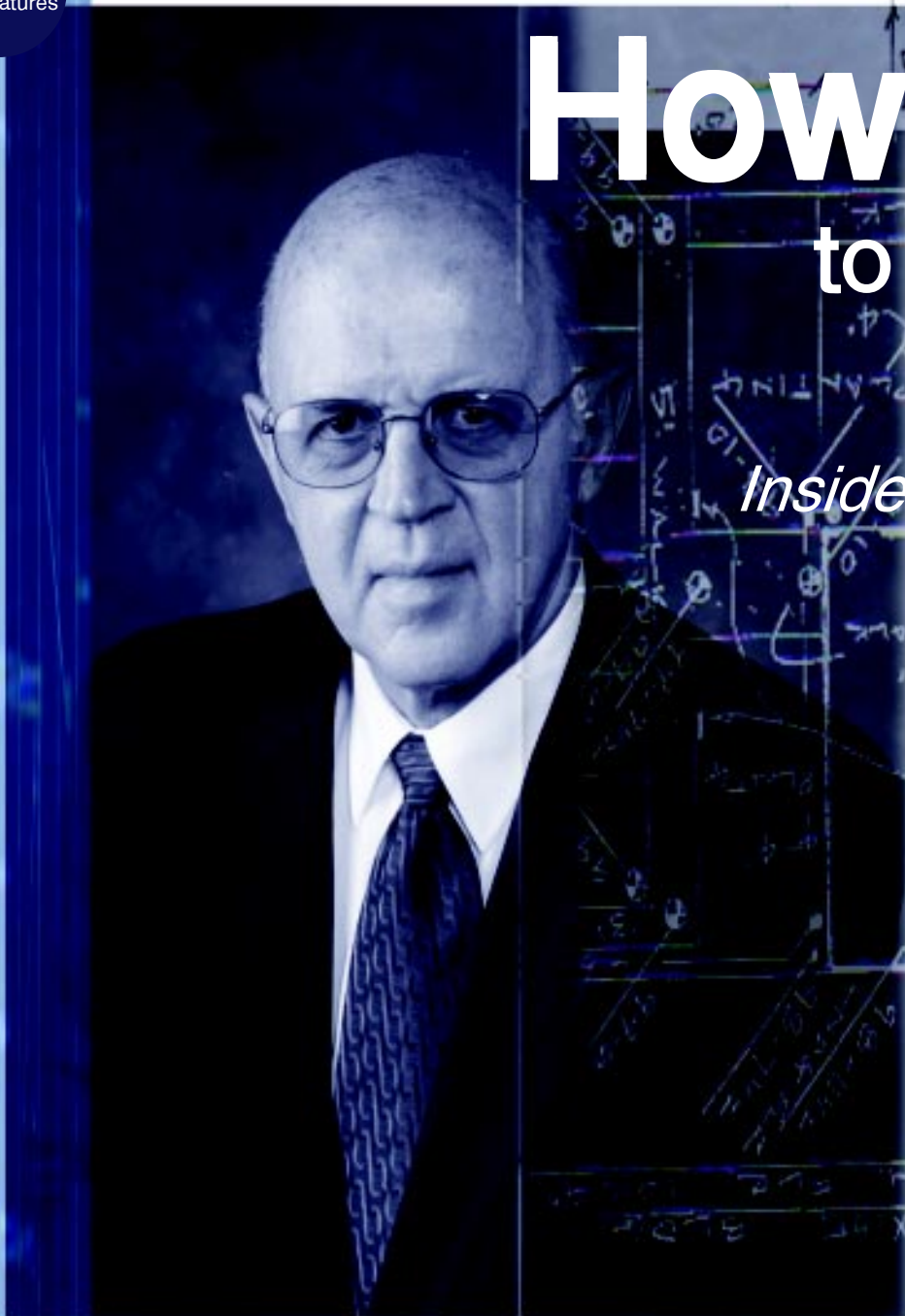


How to Build

an Ice Arena

*Inside the brain of
Jack Vivian '66*

by darcy gifford '91



Glistening ice gave Jack Vivian '66 a world as big as a dream. He coached NCAA Division I hockey for six years and founded the Central Collegiate Hockey Association. Later, as a scout for the New York Islanders of the National Hockey League (NHL), he signed future Hall-of-Famer Pat LaFontaine and ultimately sipped from the Stanley Cup four times.

But Vivian has a favorite saying:

If what you did yesterday looks big to you today, then you haven't done very much today.

So he kept reinventing himself and moved out of the coaching and administrative ranks. Today he is a world-renowned expert on the design and management of arenas, performing arts centers and convention halls. More than 100 owners, architects and engineers have turned to Vivian for his facility management expertise. He is also a college professor, an author, and the CEO of JRV Management, Inc.

Not bad for a former high school dropout. Vivian once gave up on education, instead toiling in northwestern Ontario's vast forests as a lumberjack. Raised amid the saw and paper mills of Dryden, Ontario (between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg), Vivian was an admitted "teenage tough guy" headed for trouble. Encouraged by his father, a teacher, he eventually finished high school, then set his sights on playing football and hockey at the University of Michigan.

Vivian packed everything he owned into a duffel bag and hitchhiked 900 miles, reaching Ann Arbor weary but excited about his future. Then fate intervened. Classes had already started, and U-M officials told him to come back in February. Knowing that a return to Dryden most likely spelled the end of his college aspirations, he desperately searched for an alternative. A U-M professor then suggested he enroll at Adrian College.

"I was supposed to come to Adrian for a year and then

transfer to Michigan, but I loved it here,” he said. “I thought it was heaven. I loved the food, the campus, the education, and the discipline. I decided to change my whole way of life.

“I was so happy here. I never looked back.”

Sports helped channel his boundless energy, and he starred as an offensive lineman and linebacker in football and earned a 66-12 record as a wrestler.

It was his timing, however, that proved most prophetic. A student during the College’s construction spurt of the 1960s, Vivian was hired by Krieghoff-Lenawee as a union carpenter and worked on 14 campus buildings. He laid the concrete footers on the Carillon Tower and even helped build

the Chapel steeple. His interest in facilities was born and, coupled with his love of both hockey and education, provided the basis for his improbable career.

With self-effacing humor, Vivian still sees himself as the regular guy from the Ontario woods. “When you have a few gray hairs—or no hair at all—and you’re carrying a briefcase 50 miles from home, you’re called an expert,” he said.

Modesty aside, Vivian is one of the most sought-after facility management consultants in the world. Ever wondered what it takes to create a state-of-the-art facility? Ever wondered what a professional sports insider thinks about hockey? Then it’s time to take an inventory of Jack Vivian’s brain.

Three Things Spectators Want from a Facility

1. Good sight lines.
2. Close parking.
3. Accessible services like food and washrooms.

While parking hassles and long concession stand lines can make or break a fan’s experience, Vivian advises his clients to first ask, “Who will be using this facility?” before concentrating on mechanical systems (heating and lighting, for example) and management efficiency. Vivian has published more than 90 journal articles with topics ranging from air quality to roof maintenance to motivating employees. A newly appointed Adrian College Trustee, he is helping the College devise an energy management plan.

Three Characteristics of a Great Hockey Player

1. Love for the game (“You can tell the difference between the players who love the game and those who just play the game.”)
2. Pure hockey skill
3. Heart

Vivian knows how to evaluate talent. As the head coach and general manager of the Cleveland Crusaders (1973-1976), he logged 100,000 miles to watch 220 games—lending credence to the assertion that “NHL” really stands for “No Home Life.” He joined the New York Islanders as a scout in 1976 and helped build the teams that won four consecutive Stanley Cups from 1980-1983. One of his notable signings was Ken Morrow, a member of the 1980 United States gold medal team.

Three Best Places to Watch a Hockey Game

1. Montreal Forum (Montreal, Quebec)
2. Maple Leaf Gardens (Toronto, Ontario) – closed in 1999
3. American Airlines Center (Dallas, Texas)

“The challenge is designing facilities that stand the test of time,” he said. This is crucial with today’s multi-purpose facilities where floors change from ice to hardwood (converting from hockey to basketball). JRV Management was hired by the Palace of Auburn Hills to add the professional ice surface and dashboards and to provide event management training.

Greatest Personal Hockey Influences

1. Bill Torrey (President and General Manager, New York Islanders, “a great leader and the consummate professional”)
2. Gordie Howe and Bobby Hull
3. The 1966-67 Bowling Green State University team

Vivian compiled a 112-62-10 mark while coaching at BGSU, but it was his 1966-67 “team of ragamuffins” that has a fond place in his heart. “They loved each other, and they refused to be beat.” Even with his meteoric rise in professional hockey, Vivian derives the greatest satisfaction from mentoring college students. He has taught at BGSU, Miami University (Ohio) and the University of Michigan and offers this advice:

“Find something that you enjoy doing. I have never had a job—I don’t consider what I do work. What I’ve done I would have done for nothing.”

Vivian earned his doctoral and master’s degrees from Bowling Green State University.