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Tale of Two Ballparks

Two Baseball Stadiums Rise
Simultaneously in NYC

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Mets, Yankees Stadium Projects Hit Home Stretch

by Jack Buehrer

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The first major NYC stadiums in nearly 50 years will be ready for Opening Day 2009.

Standing not a hundred feet from what will eventually be home plate at Citi Field, the future home of the New York Mets, Kenneth Johnson shakes his head and laughs.

He has just been asked if there's a sense of competition between the construction teams on the \$850 million Citi Field project in Flushing, Queens and the new \$1.9 billion Yankee Stadium just a few miles northwest in the Bronx.

"I think there's definitely an unspoken competition here," says Johnson, vice president of the Hunt Construction Group, which formed a joint venture with New York's Bovis Lend Lease to build the Mets' new 45,000-seat facility. "There's the Mets/Yankees thing, which a lot of people on this site are interested in, >>

ABOVE: The \$850 million Citi Field, which abuts the New York Mets' existing facility, Shea Stadium, is scheduled to be completed in December and ready for the start of the 2009 season in April.

but there's also a HuntBovis versus [construction manager on the Yankees site] Turner Construction. You want to do it bigger, you want to do it faster.

"I'll just say the first Subway Series will be interesting – and not just for the players."

Tight Squeeze Both HuntBovis and Turner were given a tall order by the Mets and Yankees, respectively: build a state-of-the-art sports stadium on a tricky, unforgiving site that abuts an existing stadium that is still in use at least six months out of the year. And, like all stadium projects, there was a hard deadline – Opening Day 2009 – that absolutely must be hit. Coming in late is simply not an option.

Yankee Stadium, which, like its predecessor, will be called just that, is being built across the street from the current facility, and is also bordered by the 4 subway line, and Jerome Avenue, which



In March, crews at the Citi Field site in Flushing began installing the first of the stadium's 45,000 seats in the upper deck. Photo by Michael Falco.

is a residential street.

"If you ever see a stadium project around the country, they have a lot of lay down area around the site and access on big roads and things of that nature," Turner's Joe Byrne, a project executive for Yankee Stadium, told Engineering News-

Record in December. ENR is a sister publication of New York Construction. "Here, we have the 4 train on the east, the existing stadium on the south side, we have a park on the north side, and Jerome Avenue, which is residential, on the west side. It becomes very difficult. There's no lay >>



The HuntBovis team planned to have most of the exterior work completed by the Mets' April 9 home opener at Shea Stadium, seen to the left of the new facility. Shea Stadium is scheduled to be demolished at the end of the 2008 MLB season. Photo by Michael Falco.



With most of the high work completed in early spring, the focus now is shifting to the lower seating bowl, which will start at the ground level. Note: Home plate is surrounded by the orange fencing to the right of the crane. Photo by Michael Falco.

down or staging area for any materials.”

Byrne says the Turner team had to rely on marshalling materials at nearby yards in Hunts Point, Long Island City, and New Jersey, then have them shunted into the site to be “staged methodically

ect. “Fortunately they’re playing ball mostly at night. We used that to our advantage.”

The precast brick exterior façade was all cast off-site then lifted into place during the winter so as to avoid interfering with baseball operations during the season.

“I think there’s definitely an unspoken competition here... I’ll just say the first Subway Series will be interesting – and not just for the players.”

so they don’t jam up.”

Over in Queens, Citi Field is being built literally a few feet away from Shea Stadium, the Mets’ home for more than four decades.

“We’re building a stadium where they’re still playing baseball next door,” says Tony Manion, senior vice president for Bovis and officer in charge on the Citi Field proj-

Staging hasn’t been nearly as big a problem as simply receiving deliveries, which have to be carefully coordinated with the Mets’ game schedule.

The teams on both projects, as of March, were putting the finishing touches on the stadiums’ exteriors and plan to use the 2008 season to complete the seating bowls on the inside.

Blast(s) From The Past Both stadiums, led by stadium design heavy-hitters HOK Sport, were designed with the city’s storied baseball history in mind. Where Citi Field was imagined as a modern take on the former Brooklyn Dodgers home, Ebbets Field – complete with its signature entry rotunda named after Jackie Robinson – Yankee Stadium was designed as a throwback to the pre-1970s renovation era of the old stadium.

Although the Yankee Stadium playing field is being built to exactly resemble the existing one, the exterior façade, or frieze, will feature the same granite and limestone as the original “House that Ruth Built” and the famed entrance behind home plate already has the words “Yankee Stadium” fixed in gold inlay above the three high-arched openings, evoking images of the days of Gehrig, DiMaggio, and Mantle.

Citi Field, while the exterior show- >>

Citi Field and Yankee Stadium

cases brick that resembles the masonry of Ebbets Field, also will owe a great deal of its look to the structural steel that will remain exposed throughout the stadium. And when you're entering the stadium through the rotunda, visible from the 7 Line, you'll notice the unique cable-reinforced truss "bridgework" that supports the structure.

"When you look up, it's just amazing," says Scott Hamburg of Bovis, senior project manager for the HuntBovis team. "That's just old fashioned bridgework right there."

Because of the chronically poor soil conditions in Flushing, the entire stadium, supported by 2,850, 18-in piles, is raised a few feet above the 100-year flood plane, whereas many stadiums being built today are partial underground "bowls" where the playing field and lower seats are below grade.

Both stadiums are continuing the trend of the last 15 years of ballpark design and are lowering their seating capacity to create a greater sense of intimacy, while increasing the number of luxury suites to create a greater amount of revenue. Citi Field will hold 45,000 fans, while Yankee Stadium will set 51,000. Those numbers are down from about 57,000 seats at both existing stadiums, and will result in finished products that are considerably "shorter" in height, but that cover more square footage on the ground.

The Similarities End It would seem that two baseball-only facilities that are being built just a few miles from each other would be overflowing with similarities. But for Citi Field and Yankee Stadium, aside from being two New York stadiums with an eye toward classic design that are scheduled to open in 2009, the two projects have told two completely dif-



The signature design element of Citi Field is the Jackie Robinson Rotunda, which fronts the stadium and evokes images of the old Brooklyn Dodgers home, Ebbets Field. Photo by Michael Falco.

ferent stories since well before shovels hit the ground.

First, Yankee Stadium has received the majority of the attention in the sports-crazed city. Of course, the Yankees and their stadium have been fixtures in New

York since the 1920s, while the Mets didn't arrive until the early 1960s, and Shea Stadium didn't exist until 1964. While Citi Field has proven to be a challenging site at times because of the poor soil and its close proximity to Shea, it is >>



The new Yankee Stadium, which, like Citi Field, was designed by HOK Sport of St. Louis, is intended to resemble the original "House that Ruth Built" which opened in 1923. The exterior will feature the same type of limestone and granite used in the original, which was remodeled in the 1970s. Photo by Andrew Wright.

being built, essentially, on a parking lot and has ruffled fewer feathers than its big brother in the Bronx.

Yankee Stadium has been controversial from the day plans to build it were announced. The issues mainly stem from the location of the stadium, which is being built atop public park space, which the Yankees have promised to rebuild, although plans for the parks have been slowed as costs to rebuild them have grown from \$135 million to at least \$190 million, while the Citi Field project team claims to have remained on budget throughout construction.

Residents on Jerome Avenue near Yankee Stadium aren't happy about the park space, but they're even less happy about the disruptions that the constant construction on the 14-acre site has caused.

"Construction is noisy and dirty >>



Staging has been difficult on the Yankee Stadium site, which is surrounded by a subway line, a residential street, the existing stadium, and a park. Photo by Andrew Wright.

and no one likes to see it," says Turner's Byrne. "So what we've tried to do is to mitigate it and show we're trying to be good neighbors."

To that end, the Turner team had sound-deadening materials applied to the 20-ft-high sidewalk bridge that surrounds the site.

"We had a few complaints at the beginning," Byrne adds, "but since then, it's been pretty quiet."

"It's Just Fun" Workers on both sites take pride not only in the fact that they're working on the future home of the Mets or Yankees – especially for die-hard fans on site for both teams – but also >>

The iconic entrance behind home plate features the words "Yankee Stadium" fixed in gold inlay above three soaring arches that open into the facility. Photo by Andrew Wright.



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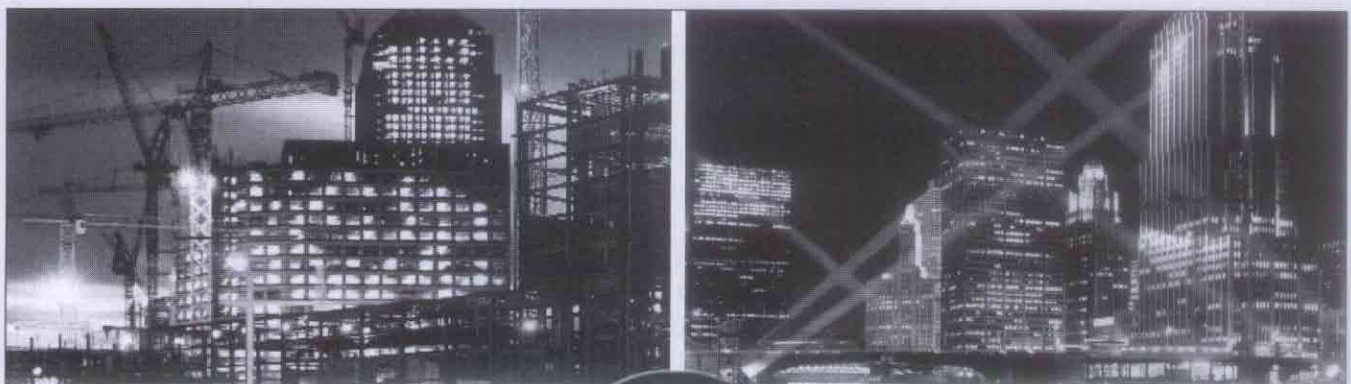
"There's a lot of enthusiasm on this site," says Hamburg of Bovis. "There are a lot of buildings going up in the city right now, but this is just unbelievably exciting. We've got Mets fans on the job, we've got Yankee fans on the job. But the level of excitement and the buzz on the site is very tangible.

"It's just fun."

Mannion says Citi Field has been a once-in-a-lifetime job for some contractors on the job.

"A lot of our contractors are Mets fans who took the job because they wanted to be a part of this project," he says. "It's something they'll never be able to do again." <<

With a capacity of about 51,000, the new Yankee Stadium will be smaller than its predecessor by about 6,000 seats. Photo by Andrew Wright.



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