

SLAM DUNK

ESI Design unveils the College Basketball Experience

The ESI Design creative team has brought the world of college basketball to life with the new College Basketball Experience in Kansas City, a 41,000-sq.-ft. facility that recreates the thrill of the game for visitors through hands-on interactives and activities.

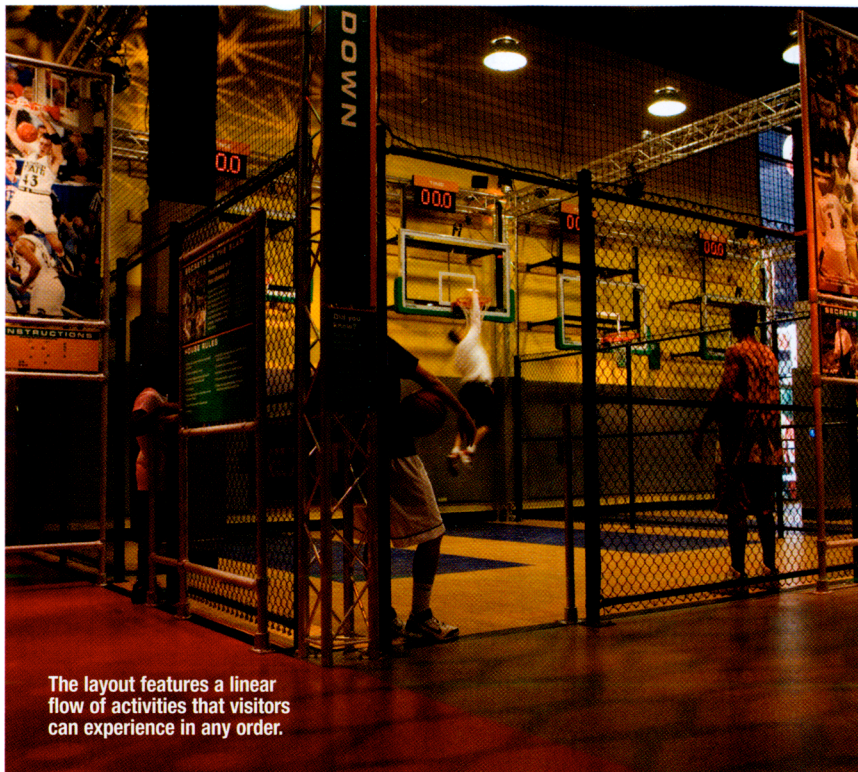
The project has been in the works for nearly a decade, and ESI's client, the National Association of Basketball Coaches, had some very clear goals for the Experience.

"They were trying to create something that would put fans inside the game of basketball in a way they never had before, and to really express the sincerity and values of coaching," says John Branigan, a project manager/graphic designer with ESI.

The overall design of the space had to focus on the positive attributes of character building, responsibility, and community service, but at the same time offer a hands-on and fun experience for visitors.

"We tried to create an environment where people would be thrust into the passion of the game. You get your hands on a ball right away, and there are a lot of activities off the bat," Branigan says.

The footprint consists of two main spaces—The College Basketball Experience is the hands-on kinetic side of the pro-



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ject, and takes up about 75 percent of the space. This section of the experience features a slightly less than full-sized basketball court, and several half-courts where visitors participate in basketball-themed interactives.

The layout features a linear flow of activities that visitors can experience in any order. One court features illuminated circles on the floor from which visitors take their shots; others focus on passing and rebounding activities. The Experience also features interactive kiosks throughout the space, where videotaped messages from coaches offer advice to attendees.

"The challenge was fitting everything into the footprint. It's a lot of court space, and it became a challenge to maintain the circulation space and exhibitry space around it," Branigan says.

In addition to the action-packed Experience, there is also the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame, which is a much more reverential and quiet space. The exhibit features a long timeline, *Epics of the Game*, which is a 70-ft. graphic wall depicting the major eras of college hoops through the 20th Century. The graphics used in the timeline and throughout the entire footprint rely on classic images of college basketball icons throughout the game's history.

The Honor Theater shows a history-themed film made up of different modules, so visitors can walk in or leave at any time during the presentation. Mentors Circle, where the concept of

mentoring is honored, features an interactive in which visitors view video messages from famous coaches, past and present. Visitors can also use a database to check out the stats and history of thousands of coaches, who they learned from and who they taught during their careers.

The Guardians of the Game section highlights the responsibilities and themes of coaching, which leads visitors to the Gallery of Honor, a

theatrical space that features the engraved names of Hall inductees on the wall. Projectors shine light down from above in the darkened hall, and unique circular kiosks on the floor allow visitors to search Hall of Honor inductees and see a video on their careers. A series of moving gobos project the inductees' names across the floor.

"The whole effect is dramatic and reverential," Branigan says. ■

