

THE COLLEGE BASKETBALL EXPERIENCE

Sprint Center, Kansas City, MO



Recently opened in the Sprint Center Arena in downtown Kansas City, MO is The College Basketball Experience” (CBE). “CBE is the first major facility of its type to celebrate the sport of men’s college basketball; a game beloved not for glamour or wealth, but for the passion of its players, the support and participation of its fan base, and the bond between coach and players,” said Kevin Henderson, CEO of CBE.

ESI Design of New York City was called upon to design the space. Edwin Schlossberg, founder and principle of the design firm stated, “ESI’s goal was to involve the fan experientially in the coach-player relationship. We wanted to bring fans inside the college game and invite them to physically interact with, and contribute to, the exhibits themselves. Fans not only break a sweat through hands-on-the-ball activities, but

also pay homage to the mentors in their own lives as they contribute testimonials and take time to reflect.” ESI specializes in creating innovative physical and virtual environments that connect audiences with today’s leading cultural and commercial institutions. Their mission is “to create informed conversations in public spaces that encourage participation, make people smarter, and empower actions towards positive change.”

From the moment visitors enter CBE “they are greeted with a landscape of sound—moving from the coaches’ pep talks to the whispers of a team huddled as players prepare for a game, to the roar of cheering crowds as they enter the main level.” The Experience is enhanced by a variety of multi-media and hands-on-the-ball activities that simulate the thrill and challenge of the college game. The voice of “the coach” leads the fans (the visi-

tors) as they move from space to space and from “this intimate perspective learn winning plays, hone their skills, honor the history and heroes of the sport, and gain a richer understanding of the pivotal role coaches play in shaping young players’ lives both on and off the court.”

Visitors can get out into the ¾ sized regulation court (Center court) and actually experience the game; shoot the ball in high energy hands on experience. There is also a Kid’s Court for younger visitors on the lower level. Jim Haney, NABC Foundation Executive Director explains, “The CBE is not a museum and the main attractions are not artifacts behind glass. We will succeed as a major sports venue by meeting and exceeding the expectations of the college basketball fan through the immersion in the physical nuances of the game while creating a compelling narrative about college basketball’s larger mission for all visitors.”

