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GRAND FORMAT SETS THE STAGE FOR SUPER BOWL XXXIX

by Thomas G. Dolan

Super Bowl XXXIX, scheduled for Feb. 6 in Jacksonville, Fla., is the largest single-day sporting event in the world. The drama of the two top football teams playing for the National Football League championship constitutes grand public theater. The visual spectacle, however, goes far beyond the field. And much of this scenic décor is made possible by digital. So let's take a look behind the scenes at what goes on to create the visual excitement for the fans.

The All-Important Logo

The central visual element of the Super Bowl emanates from the National Football League in the form of its logo. Michael Capiraso, vice president-executive creative director for the NFL, said each Super Bowl possesses a unique logo. A key intent is that long after a game has been played, it's immediately recognizable from its logo.

Fans also will remember this Super Bowl for its theme. This is the first time the NFL has created a theme for the event. "The theme for this Super Bowl is building bridges," Capiraso said. "Jacksonville is characterized by literal bridges which connect the community. But the graphic depiction of a bridge on the logo also connotes the equities of the game of football how it brings people together for the enjoyment of the sport and so builds bridges, not only between people, but also different generations of people." >>>>



To develop and implement the bridges theme across all venues and the host city of Jacksonville, the NFL – for the first time in 19 years – put out bids for printing. Eight companies received invitations, consisting of Vision International of Salt Lake City, which formed the Look and Décor team, led by Project Manager Brian Murphy of subjectMATTER in Dallas. Other team members include design by Infinite Scale Design Group, Salt Lake City; lighting by C. Dall Brown lighting consultants, Dallas; and installation by Roe Fabricators, Philadelphia. Collectively, they proposed a plan of about 160 pages, outlining every detail to complete the project on time and within its budget of more than \$1 million.

Out of the eight companies, the NFL and city of Jacksonville invited four companies to present their plans, and after just one hour, they awarded the bid to the Look and Décor team.

Getting the Job Done

Infinite Scale's job is to create a comprehensive environmental design plan. Its mandate was to create the look and feel of the event. This naturally would encompass the site of the game, ALLTEL Stadium – home of the Jacksonville Jaguars. It also includes the Jacksonville International Airport; the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center, which will serve as the media center; the Adam's Mark Jacksonville Hotel, which was transformed into NFL headquarters for the event; plus seven other hotels for the competing teams and their families.

Prior to launching Infinite Scale, founding partners Amy Lukas, Molly

Mazzolini and Cameron Smith worked on the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City. Lukas and Smith headed the design team for the 2002 games and were responsible for creating the visual design elements, including the colossal building wraps that adorned Salt Lake City's skyline, athlete's uniforms, stadium wraps and the look of the torch relay. Mazzolini oversaw brand compliance with 70-plus sponsors of the games to ensure consistency of Olympic logos and terminology.

"The varied applications of our work for the Olympic Winter Games showcased our experience in a way that directly translates to the large-scale applications of the Super Bowl," Lukas said.

First of all, consider the colors of the Super Bowl logo. Mazzolini described them as the dark blue of the ocean and a lighter blue for the sky, along with oranges and yellows, suggesting the sunrises and sunsets of the Jacksonville area. But she said the colors, along with the abstract design, have to capture not only the sense of the locale, but also along with some reds and deeper oranges, convey a sense of toughness for the bridges and the game, as well as transmit patterns of energy and excitement of the crowds.

How to Wrap the Super Bowl

The scope of the project is enormous. First, Infinite Scale created about 450 files on a Macintosh, using Adobe Illustrator and InDesign software, and sent them to Vision International for output on the Vutek UltraVu 5300 and the NUR Blueboard 2 HiQ Plus grand-format printers. They'll use the NUR for the mesh treatments and the Vutek for everything else.

Gene Chambers, vice president of marketing and sales, Vision International, said they'll produce more than 4,100 pieces overall, starting with the smallest pieces – 150 18-inch-by-8-inch, pressure-sensitive vinyl decals with the Super Bowl logo to grace doors and windows of the various Super Bowl sites. The biggest single pieces are eight 22-foot-by-103-foot, PVC-vinyl, mesh scoreboard trusses. Illuminating the field will be four giant light towers, 60 feet tall by 30 feet wide, clothed in SeeMee mesh and sporting the teams' logos.



To convey the look and feel of the event, Vision International will print on four miles of perforated polyester fabric that will cover the perimeter fencing. To surround the field, Roe Fabricators will install Stafford backdrop, 7 feet tall and 1,200 feet long, covered with Super Bowl and team logos. Then on the front of the field wall will go printed, pressure-sensitive, vinyl logos of both teams and the Super Bowl, mounted on plywood.

NFL hotel headquarters will wear a 45-foot-by-foot-90-foot wrap of mesh, while the bridgeway between the hotel and the parking garage will be clothed in Clear Focus window perforated vinyl, so the walkers can see outside.

And don't forget about the banners – all 2,760 of them, most of them in polyester fabric, and in sizes of 2 feet by 2 feet, 2 feet by 12 feet, 3 feet by 4.5 feet and 3 feet by 8 feet.

Chambers said the printing itself isn't much different from that done on smaller digital printers. He explains it's not that Vision International has more cutting-edge technology than others. But what puts his company in the league of only five or six companies that can handle a project like this is simply scale – the number of machines and range of equipment. "Typically a printer might have one or two presses, but we operate eight different presses, and have a wide variety of finishing equipment for the many things that need to be done in our 70,000-square-foot facility."

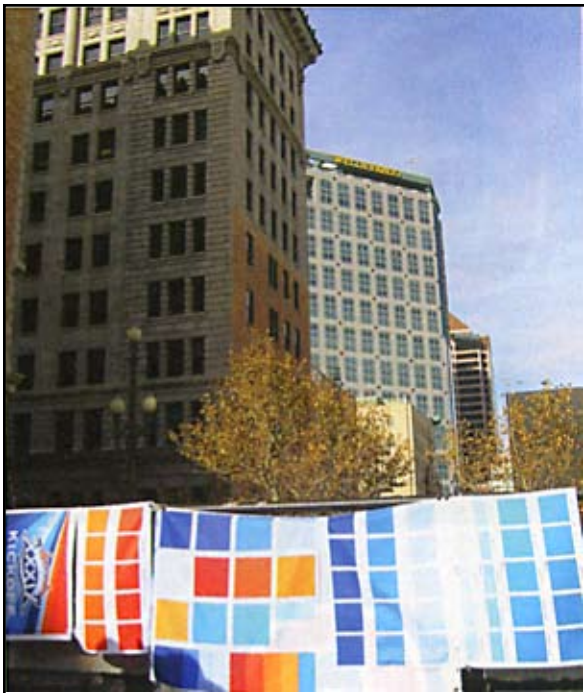
Top left: Bruce Darlington, left, Vision International's lead press operator, and Steve Swanson, right, Vision's prep supervisor, check color on the Vutek UltraVu 5300 in Vision's 20,000 square foot, color-correct press room. Above and below left: Test prints of the colors found in the Super Bowl XXXIX logo are displayed in the sunlight in downtown Salt Lake City. Cameron Smith inspects the cool color palette.

The Clock Is Ticking

Just as a football game is run by the clock, so too is the schedule for the graphics. They picked the visual theme in July, with initial designs to the NFL by Sept. 1. Printing began in mid-December, with installation scheduled for mid-January, so everything will be ready by Feb. 6.

But, also similar to a football game, complications inevitably arise. "One of the headaches with this kind of project is that the design typically has to go through three to four iterations before the final design is approved," Chambers said. "That always leaves less time than anticipated for production. This is a one-day event that won't allow for any delay. And the clock is ticking."

He added every bit of the space to be covered has to be measured: You just



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— Gene Chambers, vice president of marketing and sales, Vision International

can’t take someone else’s word for it, since many of these areas have not been measured before. The measuring took place before the plans, with the hope that both would match. But if there are any glitzes that means the work has to be done again.

The schedule isn’t exactly as it might appear in other ways, too. The city of Jacksonville wants to get as much mileage out of the event as possible. So the graphics go up in the airport terminal as much before the games as possi-

ble. And the same goes for the media center and hotels. Moreover, the two competing teams won’t be known until two weeks before the game. So, it’s then that each of their hotels will be decked out with their own graphics, as well as those of the NFL.

Brett Roe of Roe Fabricators said he “will have 20 to 30 installers working around the clock with tall cranes and other special equipment from mid-January through the Friday before the Sunday game. Each piece represents a

separate challenge, and has to be to deal with wind loads and other weather conditions.” Roe adds that the hurricane season has passed, but there could be heavy rains. “If so, we’ll have to deal with it.”

Chambers said the tremendous scope of the project “requires extreme coordination” and dedication, but the Look and Décor team is up to it. “It’s very exhilarating to work around the clock to be part of an event that the whole world will see.” 