

Inside Sport India

June 11, 2017

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Young entrepreneur with vision for gen next sports infra

by Ruchit Bhatia - 07/11/2017

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A first of its kind and an iconic sportainment destination. The Arena by TransStadia. It is state of the art, relying on the best technologies – still affordable for athletes. It is high-tech – still self-sustainable. This a vision to the future of best sporting facilities with optimum utilization for wise financial viability. A business model with a commitment to Indian sports.

The first true private, public partnership sports infrastructure is a brainchild of sports entrepreneur Udit Seth. The one of its kind in the country sports facility – The Arena by TransStadia – was recently inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. Sporting legends Pallela Gopichand, Kidambi Srikanth, Gagan Narang, Sushil Kumar, Bhaichung Bhutia, Paralympian Deepa Malik, former India kabaddi captain Anup Kumar and cricketers Irfan Pathan and Parthiv Patel were present to acknowledge the facility and extend their support.

The project uses world-class technology for stand convertibility from StadiArena UK, and seat retractability by T-Box, both patented technologies. This ensures that on a small piece of land, the project that accommodates 1.4m sq. ft. of constructed area can be used for sport, entertainment, wellness, hospitality, retail and more.

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The journey that has begun with a successful pilot project from Ahmedabad in Gujarat, is now set to step across various Indian States. Udit Sheth, Founder and Managing Director, SE TransStadia, in a candid talk with InsideSport shared about the facilities, business model and the goals ahead. Here are the excerpts:

Insidesport: Tell us something about TransStadia and the whole idea behind it.

Udit Sheth: I have been quite passionate about sports and wanted to create a viable commercial plan to live my passion. If sport starts moving from CSR bucket to business bucket, sustainability becomes an issue but then industry can take-off by this. This is what I have tried to incorporate in our business model for TransStadia. Once money starts pooling, it can be used for sports development as well. Other than that, this kind of model provides high utilization. With its multi approach including hospitality, wellness, leisure and much more, it offers almost 70% utilization – compared to 2% utilization of traditional arenas.



IS: You also manage an automotive company. But then you took a leap through your interest and built TransStadia. How did this transformation happen?

US: It is quite a journey. SETCO is a well-oiled machine and one of the leading companies in India and as well as globally. I am a part of it and have future plans for its growth. However, urban infra is an untouched space and still developing. Multi utility infra is still unheard of in Indian space. But if it can generate high footfall, the business model is quite



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IS: Your plan seems to be well-organized around urban market. How do you see it penetrating into semi-urban or rural areas?

US: We can go. But with the level of spectators the facilities will have to change. For example, in Ahmedabad we have a 20,000-seat stadium. If I have to build same facility for a city like Mumbai, it will be 40,000 (seats) and for Vadodara, then it will have 8k-10k capacity. So, based on demographic dividend we will go to any destination for such a project.

IS: You are also running a Mobile Performance Lab as part of your project. Can you tell us something about it?

US: See, the talent is in the deepest corner of India. And if we look at the current Asian Athletics Championships, India has won record number of medals. But how do you tap this talent? How to find this talent? Reaching out to this talent with a Mobile Lab like facility is a very innovative way. Rather than expecting rural part of the country coming to the urban centre. I believe with such models, private sectors can do a lot for sports and therefore there is a need for privatization in sports.



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IS: After having spent so much on infra, returns and affordability remain a concern. It is obvious utilization of the facility will incur heavy costs. How can a common man benefit from this?

US: There is a very simple agenda. We work with the sports authorities of various States, and we give out sports membership to upcoming talent. They can avail the facilities, free of cost.



IS: Building such an infra requires support from all quarters. There are operational and procedural challenges. What all challenges did you deal with them?

US: Yeah, one has to go through a very complex system to get such things done. Sometimes what happens is the project gets stuck once the things are politically motivated. For me, I was lucky to have Gujarat government by my side. If you see, the State has been very active in sports and has raised funds as well. A State known for its street food and laziness now has an active sports culture.

However, there are people with ulterior motives to create obstacles. We faced a similar RTI hurdle. When we were going for the launch, I had to rise before the Gujarat High Court and prove it that we have followed the due process. Once the growth aspects are understood, the project will move quickly.

IS: We are seeing a lot many leagues coming up in India. Do you as a sports entrepreneur have any plans to invest intellectual property side of sports?

US: Right now we are trying to focus on the development side of sports, and be the backbone for sports infra, science and technology. Yeah, maybe to galvanize our structure we might get into the business but only at a later stage.



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IS: Sports science and education is an area which needs to be looked upon in our nation. Being a sports entrepreneur, do you plan to take any initiative in this aspect of sports development?

US: According to me, *Infra* is not one-dimensional. It has multiple facets. Sports science and development is one aspect of it. To bring sports into education, one has to gain confidence of the existing educational bodies. We need to create a robust educational system and increase participation in sports. I believe sports can work only through participation and not on monopoly. We need to develop kids who are interested in sports rather than only being an athlete.

THE ARENA BY TRANSSTADIA

QUICK FACTS:

- **FIFA Standard Football Stadium** - 25,000 seating facilities
- **Indo-Arena**: air-conditioned 12,000 sq. ft. pile-less multi-purpose indoor arena
- **T-Seat**: modular and retractable seating systems
- **Turf Protection** - world's only turf protection system manufactured from truly innovative HDPE material, with a 30-year UV degradation guarantee

Sports performance & Rehab Centre:

- Recovery & rehabilitation program
- Nutrition planning centre
- Non-invasive treatment of sports injuries
- Assessment & Interventions

14 sports facilities at EKA Club

- Multi-sports hall for Futsal, Volleyball, Basketball, Badminton
- Badminton courts
- Basketball courts
- Squash courts
- Table Tennis courts
- Tennis courts
- Volley Ball courts

Green Standards

- Sustainable site development
- Water conservation by rainwater harvesting, and fire-fighting and zero-waste water discharge
- state-of-the-art sewage and water treatment plants
- Energy-efficient building by providing terrace gardens and energy-efficient equipment
- 16,000 sq.m of green belt and landscape, including vertical greenery
- Maximum use of recyclable materials and recovered materials
- Improving indoor environmental quality by using maximum natural lighting

TransStadia Academies:

- Holistic development through sports for all programs
- Coaching for Nutrition
- Psychology Development

- Roof top infinity temperature controlled swimming pool
- 16000 sq ft body transformation centre



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