

Packaging Energy and Excitement



Hoops is a premier, multi-court basketball arena for kids

Seven fathers had a dream—one inspired by long hours on hard bleachers watching their children play competitive basketball.

“We thought we could provide a new facility that the market hadn’t seen before,” says Jeff Bennett, one of the original investors in Hoops, a premier multi-court basketball arena in Louisville, Kentucky. “We wanted a big, open environment where you don’t feel cramped. A place where you can enjoy time with your basketball player and the rest of your family—a nice place to have lunch or breakfast, with activities for other kids who are not playing basketball.”

The group looked at leasing space, but quickly decided that an existing building wouldn’t meet their requirements. Bennett knew Lichtefeld Inc., a Butler Builder® in Louisville, through his own company, Bennett’s Gas. The propane supplier often provides heat for buildings under construction. He asked Stan Lichtefeld, the firm’s secretary/treasurer, to talk with the group about building a new facility.

“I got started on the front end as a contractor, helping them with site selection and budgeting for their business plan,” Lichtefeld explains. “After working on it for five or six months, they could see the project was going to be a little more than they had anticipated, so they decided to look at adding two or three investors. That’s when our company also became involved as a partner.”

Lichtefeld Inc.’s experience in building recreational facilities made the company a perfect match for the project. And Stan Lichtefeld himself is a father with kids in competitive sports. He could relate to the need for a customer-friendly building.

Kentucky was once considered a mecca for basketball, but today its best athletes seem to be leaving the state to play for college



powerhouses around the country. Hoops plans to be a training facility for Kentucky youth, helping to keep the state’s talent at home.

“For years we have all traveled around the country and been in and out of these kinds of facilities. We definitely had some strong ideas and direction,” Bennett says. “There is nothing quite like this in Louisville. Our focus is basketball.”

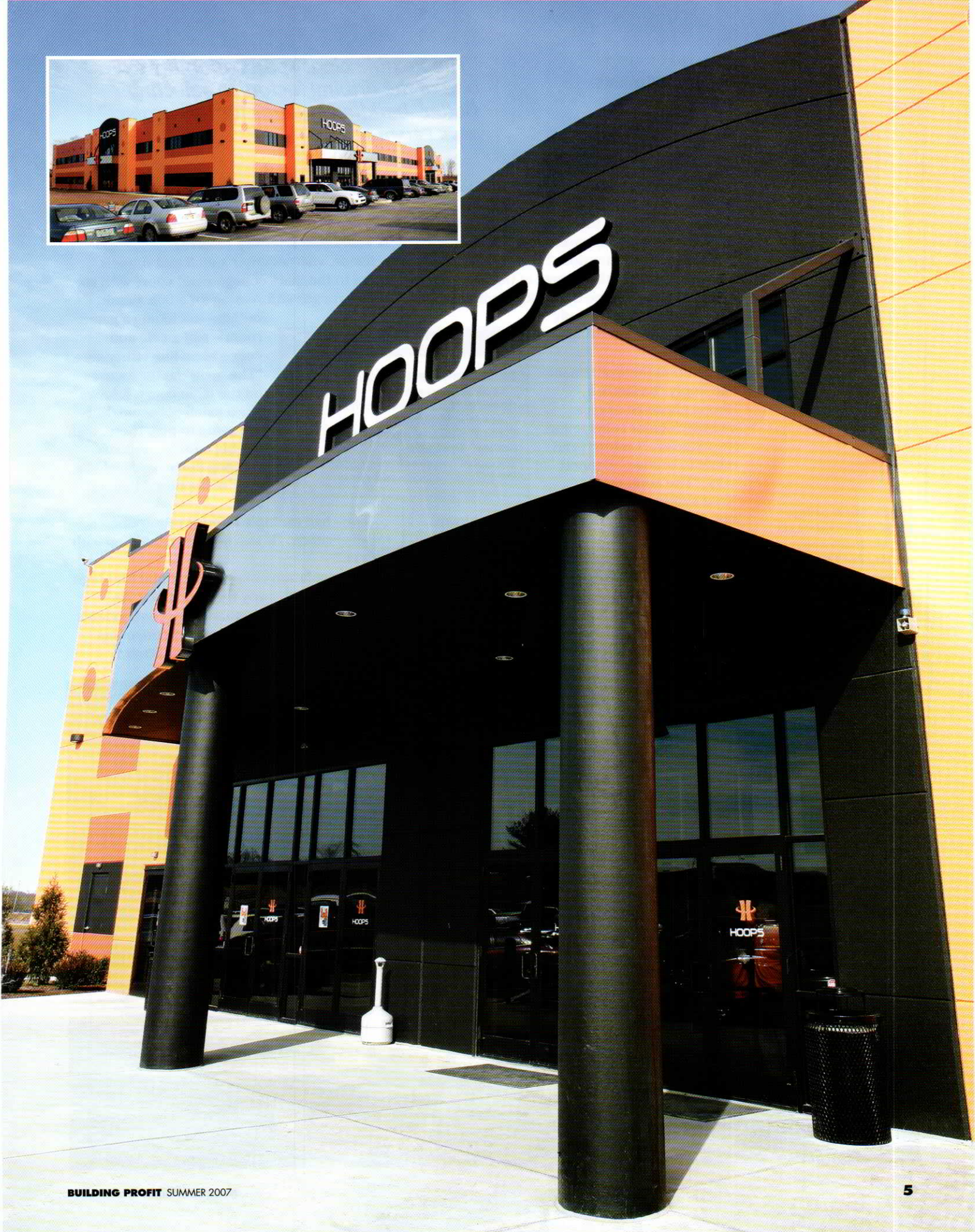
An “awesome” exterior

Lichtefeld brought in Berry-Prindle Architects Inc., a Louisville firm, to work out the building design. Hoops had chosen an ideal 8-acre site in the Bluegrass Industrial Park, visible from I-64 near its intersection with I-265. The location, however, dictated a number of design requirements that had to be reconciled with the group’s ideas for the new business.

“We had to maintain what the owners were going for, while pleasing the developer,”

The building’s design is appropriate to the business park where it is located and also reflects the energy of the program inside. The architect used tilt-up concrete walls, dynamic curvilinear shapes and forms, and an eye-catching black-and-orange exterior color scheme that implies “basketball.”

BY MEV WILSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY D. ALTMAN FLEISHER





Hoops' main college-sized court boasts six VIP skyboxes and seating for 2,000. Designed to look like a small coliseum, it delivers "big-time" ambience for the weekend tournaments.

recalls architect Mike Prindle. "There was a lot of back and forth while we worked it out."

The park wanted the building to look like more than just a big warehouse. The owners wanted to draw attention. "They wanted the exterior to reflect the energy of the program inside. We used some dynamic curvilinear shapes and forms to imply energy in motion," Prindle explains.

To add to the excitement and imply "basketball," Hoops chose an orange-and-black color scheme for the exterior. "Children can relate to orange," Bennett says. "The adults say, 'That's different.' The kids say, 'Wow. That's awesome.' They're blown away."

To make it look more like the park's office buildings, Prindle incorporated about 90 windows. "But the basketball courts couldn't have sunlight affecting players' shots," Lichtefeld adds. "We used Spandrel glass. It looks like dark, tinted windows from the

"The flexible clear span capability was one of the driving factors in selecting Butler® building systems for this project"

MIKE PRINDLE

outside and it doesn't allow sunlight to pass through."

A customer-friendly interior

Inside, visitors enter a mall that funnels them to the main college-sized court with six VIP skyboxes and seating for 2,000. Retail outlets—including a game room—and a café and coffee shop line either side. "The 'wow' factor focuses on the main court. It looks like a small coliseum. Kids are going to play there, with the big cube scoreboard hanging down, and feel like they're big time," Bennett says.

"They had multiple interior requirements," recalls Prindle. "It was not just a building with courts."

Two regulation college courts and four high school courts occupy the main floor. An 11,000-square-foot mezzanine accommodates locker rooms with showers and restrooms, party rooms, a 5,000-square-foot fitness

HOOPS

Butler Builder: Lichtefeld, Incorporated, Louisville, Kentucky

Architect: Berry-Prindle Architects Inc., Louisville, Kentucky

Size: 90,000 total square feet

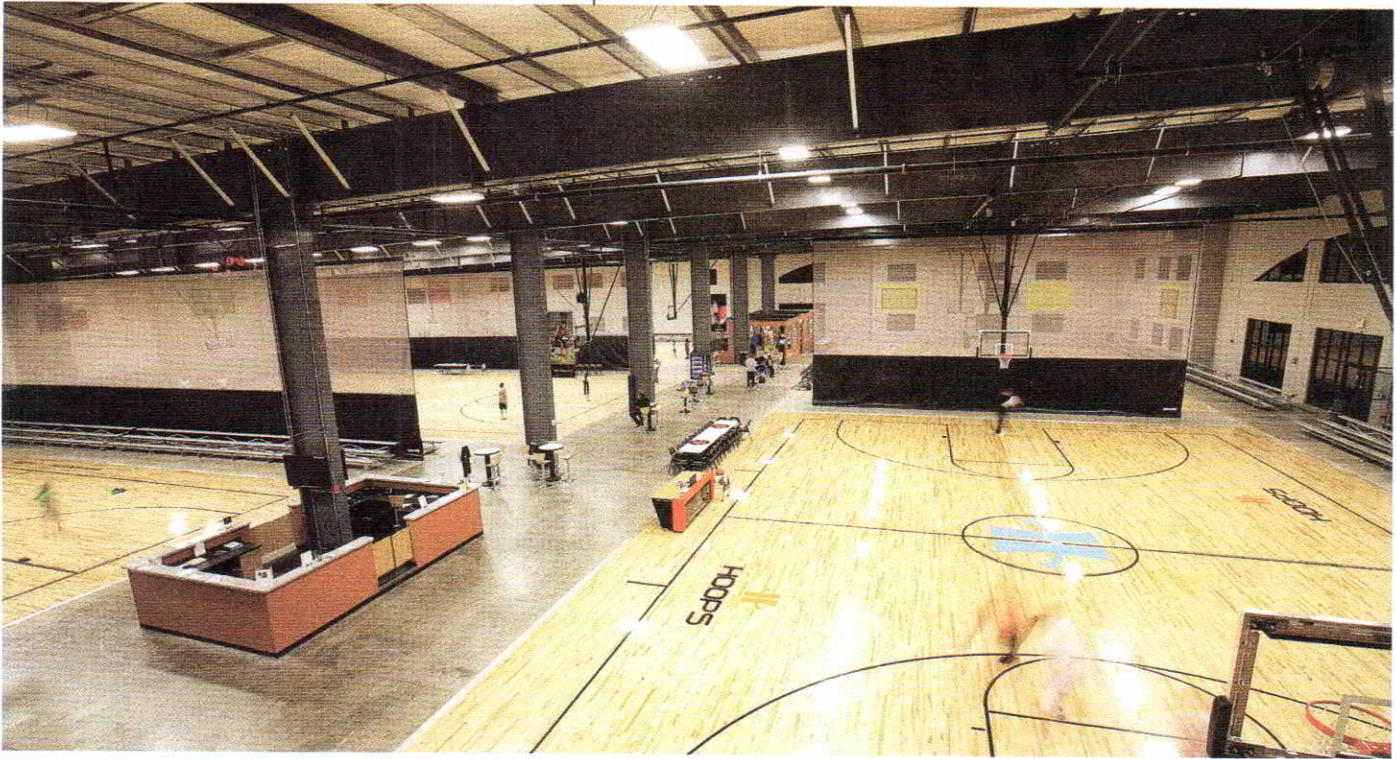
Butler® Systems:
Widespan™ structural framing system
MR-24® standing seam roof system





"We have Conner Uniforce wooden floors—NBA-style floors, the best in the industry. It was critical to have a state-of-the-art roof system"

JEFF BENNETT



The Widespan™ structural framing system provides cost-effective space for the building's two regulation-sized college courts and four high school courts. And the state-of-the-art courts are protected by the equally sophisticated weathertight MR-24® standing seam roof system.

center, referee lounges and administrative offices. Wi-fi access throughout the building allows parents to work while their children play.

"When you're trying to be the best, you have to go the extra mile," says Bennett. "We have accommodated the customer in every way, from the café to the restrooms, to the seating area, to the sound and lighting systems, to the flooring, to the climate control and entertainment alternatives."

Driving to the finish

Lichtefeld broke ground on the \$4.5-million facility in May. "It was crucial to open the first of the year for the basketball season," he says. "And weather was a challenge. I heard it was the seventh wettest year on record."

The building has tilt-up concrete walls, a Widespan™ structural system and an MR-24® standing seam roof system. The easily assembled Butler® systems, Lichtefeld says, helped close in the project quickly so the subcontractors could get to work. "We started the roof and structural system over the offices first. We were actually hanging drywall in that

WE'VE GOT GAME

Hoops is a premier basketball destination for men, women and children of all ages. As its slogan proudly proclaims, Hoops is "where the game is."

"We have open gym during weekdays and leagues that run six to nine weeks on nights and weekends," explains Jeff Bennett, one of seven partners in the venture. "We play tournament style. Teams come in from around the country and play Friday and Saturday with bracket play on Sunday."

The arena provides an attractive, affordable alternative for events too small for the bigger venues. Hoops will host other competitions as well, including gymnastics, volleyball and cheerleading.

"First, we want to raise the level of basketball competition here in Louisville and around the state," says Stan Lichtefeld.

"When you're trying to be the best, you have to go the extra mile"

JEFF BENNETT



area before the roof was finished at the other end of the building."

The Widespan structural system also provided economical, wide-open space for the courts. "The flexible clear span capability was one of the driving factors in selecting Butler building systems for this project," Prindle says. "We looked at clear-spanning the whole thing—nearly 300 feet—but the cost was prohibitive. So we were able to work in a center row of columns with the courts on either side. Butler has such a good system that it can accommodate those kinds of needs."

The weathertight roof was extremely important to preserve the partners' investment, Bennett adds. "We have Conner Uniforce wooden floors—NBA-style floors, the best in the industry. It was critical to have a state-of-the-art roof system."

Architect Prindle agrees. "We used the MR-24 roof system on our own building, which tells you the level of confidence we have in it. Once you get it sealed and it's installed properly, it has been our experience that it functions well beyond the warranty."

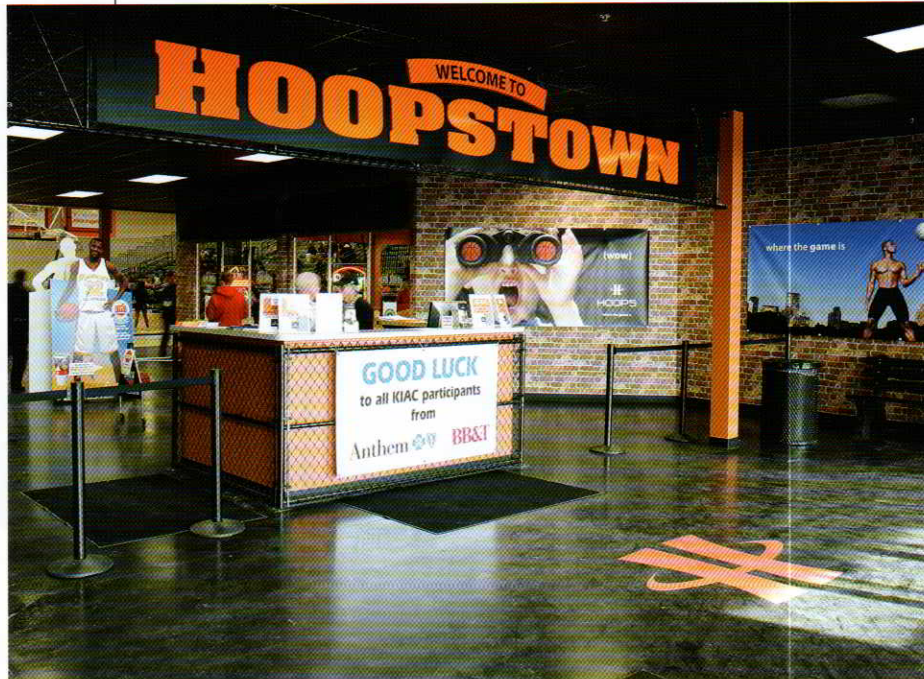
Every detail of the building was finished to say "the best." The owners decided that they wanted a smooth transition from the wooden court floors to the surrounding concrete. In most arenas, a two-inch drop from court to sidelines presents a tripping hazard. To avoid this, Lichtefeld first poured the concrete slab, then formed the tilt walls, and returned once the roof was in place to pour a two-inch concrete topping around the courts.

Nothing but net

Hoops opened just eight months after construction commenced. "We were all very, very happy with the time frame. We were on schedule and on budget, which is even better. To me, that's pretty rare," Bennett says.

Response to the facility has been tremendous. More than 4,000 people poured through the turnstiles the first weekend. Teams that travel all over the country claim Hoops ranks among the best.

Hoops quickly gained status as an official U.S. Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) facility and a designated Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) tournament facility. The McDonald's All American Game named Hoops



its Official Practice Facility for the 30th Anniversary games in March 2007. Hoops is also hosting the Kentucky Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (KIAC) men's and women's championships and the Adidas Boys Jr. Phenom 150.

"We're adding to our customer base week by week. It's great," Bennett concludes.

"I don't know of anything different we could have done better." ■

Hoops offers much more than its courts: its interior mall (top photo above) includes retail outlets, a café (above) and a game room. The second floor holds party rooms, a fitness center and much more, and there is wi-fi access throughout.