



For Immediate Release: Wednesday, April 1, 2015

OKC ENERGY FC SIGNS NIELSEN TO EMERGENCY CONTRACT ***Head coach to suit up for team this weekend***

OKLAHOMA CITY – OKC Energy FC Head Coach Jimmy Nielsen and General Manager Jason Hawkins announced Wednesday Nielsen had signed a player contract with the team on an emergency basis. The signing comes after goalkeepers Evan Newton and Ray Clark were both ruled out for this weekend. Energy FC faces the Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC on Saturday afternoon in Colorado Springs.

“I’m absolutely terrified,” Nielsen said. “I haven’t played in almost two years, but this is what we feel is necessary considering our current situation. We’re a team, and we’re all in this together – everyone from myself to Carl Baum.”

Hawkins stated he was unsure if Nielsen or Bryan Byars would get the start Saturday afternoon, noting “we’ll have to make that call in a couple of days. It’s just too soon to assume anything at this point.”

Nielsen began his professional career with hometown club AaB Aalborg in Denmark, helping the team to the 1999 Danish Superliga championship. After a brief stint at Leicester City in 2007, he transferred to Danish club Vejle, for whom he made 63 appearances over two years. He was named Danish Goalkeeper of the Year in 1998 and 2004, and also represented his country at the U-19 and U-21 levels.

In February 2010, Nielsen joined Major League Soccer and became the starting goalkeeper for Sporting Kansas City. As a member of Sporting KC, Nielsen was a two-time MLS All Star, the 2012 MLS Goalkeeper of the Year, and goalkeeper for the 2012 Lamar Hunt U.S. Open championship club and the 2013 MLS Cup winning squad. He was named team captain prior to start of the 2012 season.

When Nielsen began his MLS career, he instantly became a fan favorite, whose signature bleach-blonde locks earned him the nickname “White Puma.” But it wasn’t just his play that endeared Nielsen to fans, though—it was his personality. He was known for stopping his car at local parks when driving by and joining in games with random children. Often, Nielsen would pull kids out of the crowd and have them kick balls at him as part of his pre-game warm-up.

“I’ve been playing with the kids over in the Classen Ten Penn neighborhood,” Nielsen added. “They’re a pretty tough group and I’m headed over there this afternoon to get some more work in.”

--www.EnergyFC.com--

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TOURISM DEPARTMENT UNVEILS 2013 SPRING CAMPAIGN
Campaign to air in seven out-of-state markets

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department recently unveiled its 2013 spring campaign in seven out-of-state markets. The campaign entitled “Come See for Yourself” features a variety of 60 and 30 second commercials and airs during live news and sports action in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Wichita Falls and Amarillo markets in Texas, Wichita, Kansas; Little Rock, Arkansas and the Springfield and Joplin markets in Missouri.

“Oklahoma’s new television ads present a striking contrast amidst the plethora of tourism ads airing during the spring travel planning season,” said OTRD Executive Director Deby Snodgrass. “Unlike those of our competitors that focus on sweeping landscapes and select points of interest, Oklahoma’s ads invite visitors to have fun doing a myriad of activities from rappelling, fishing, skiing and spelunking to winemaking, flying and dining. There is something for everyone. Come see for yourself!”

The production was coordinated by Oklahoma City-based Jordan Advertising and utilized the services of Epoxy Films and Creative Audio Lab in Broken Arrow and Steelhouse in Tulsa. The footage was shot over a 12-day period in 23 locations, covering every country region of Oklahoma. The production crew included 24 members and local talent was cast for the project. The videos feature everything from Oklahoma’s renowned attractions to the state’s breathtaking outdoor landscapes.

OTRD’s home on the internet, TravelOK.com features a landing page with all the commercials and click-through information regarding each location featured. The page can be found online at <http://www.travelok.com/come-see-for-yourself>.

In addition to television advertising, the interactive team has launched a YouTube video campaign to coincide with the traditional media campaign. This interactive campaign utilizes the same commercials and plays them at the beginning of YouTube videos in selected markets. A companion banner ad allows users to click through to TravelOK.com.

A Promise to Keep

By Cassie Gage/SoonerSports.com

June 10, 2012

DES MOINES, Iowa – In the hours following her national championship win in the shot put at Drake Stadium, University of Oklahoma junior **Tia Brooks** sat in the lobby of the team's hotel crying. Brooks had been keeping the emotions inside since January, well before Friday and well before she won the indoor title in March. Every time she stepped up to compete, there was extra motivation to perform to the best of her abilities.

Just one week after setting the Oklahoma program record in the indoor shot put on Jan. 21, Brooks got a phone call from her mother that changed her life. Her grandmother, Roberta Neal, the woman Brooks says was one of the most influential people in her life, had passed away. It's a pain she's carried for five months.

Granny was a varsity basketball player at Lincoln High School in Forrest City, Ark., and wanted Brooks to follow in her footsteps. Neal felt Brooks could be the next Courtney or Ashley Paris, but Brooks chose track and field instead.

"She really didn't embrace (track and field) until later in my career, when I got better at it," Brooks said. "It was that along with seeing me enjoy it. It made me happy, and it was getting me through school and life."

Now that Brooks' collegiate season is over, she shifts her focus to a lifelong dream. She enters the U.S. Olympics Trials later this month as the fourth-ranked American in the event. Brooks and her coach, Brian Blutreich, share the same dream of seeing the junior in red, white and blue for the 2012 Games in London. But, there's someone else who wanted that for her, too.

"We talked about the Olympics. I asked her to promise me that she'd be there to watch if I made it to the Olympics, and I promised her I'd do my best to get to there," Brooks said. "Then she got sick. I don't go home much, but when I did, that's what we'd talk about."

A week before Neal passed, Brooks met the Olympic A standard for the event when she threw the program record of 60 feet, eight inches at the Mosier Indoor Facility during the J.D. Martin Invitational, a mark she's since surpassed with a 62-4 at the indoor national meet. The mark guaranteed Brooks a spot at the Olympic Trials and assured the track and field community the junior was ready for the international stage.

"The nursing home had a website where you could send emails to residents. The last email I sent her told her I had met the A standard and that I had a really good chance to make the team," Brooks said between tears. "It puts my heart at ease that I can say she knew I was going toward my dream. Whether she's here on Earth or not, she's there watching me. If I keep my promise, she'll still be able to keep hers."

Granny was on Brooks' mind this week in Des Moines and she had quite the cheering section on hand Friday evening. For the first time in four years, Brooks' mother, Cyd, was there to watch her daughter compete.

"Friday morning was the best," Brooks said. "Waking up and knowing I had my family here to support me was awesome. The fact they've never seen me throw and drove eight hours to watch me was the highlight of my career so far."

What they witnessed was Brooks winning her first outdoor national championship in the shot put. And hopefully Des Moines won't be the only place they see her compete this year. There's a promise to be kept.

"If Granny were here, she would tell me how proud she is of me," Brooks said. "She'd tell me how happy she is I'm working to keep my promise and that she'd keep hers."

When Superstitions Attack
By Cassie Gage/TheAHL.com
March 24, 2012

Hockey players are notorious for having routines.

Point streaks, win streaks, playoffs. If someone has a good thing going, don't mess with the system.

Take Oklahoma City Barons captain Bryan Helmer for instance. Helmer always puts his equipment on right to left, tapes his sticks between each period and never touches his skates during a game. It's been that way for years and why question a routine that's resulted in three Calder Cup championships and over 1,000 games played?

While Helmer's routine is considered normal, players at every level have habits that venture outside what may seem ordinary. There's the lack of personal hygiene at times, whether it's not shaving or not getting a haircut. There's the music -- Madonna, Journey, and even the Scissor Sisters? Completely common.

Sprinkling baby powder on a stick and not talking to your mother on gameday? Totally normal.

Then there's Oklahoma City forward Triston Grant, who may be the most habitual person in the AHL. He's running away with the Barons team award for "Most Likely to Star in the *Groundhog Day* Sequel."

Grant likes his coffee. Daily visits to a local Starbucks is common. Depending on the mood, it's a caramel macchiato or an energy drink. That's not too unconventional.

When players were asked about their teammates' practices, Grant's name came up every time. In fact, one Barons teammate who wished to remain anonymous sold out Grant's pregame ritual.

Magic rocks.

Yes. Magic rocks, à la Pedro Cerrano in the 1989 movie *Major League*.

Kept away in a small film container, Grant's magic rocks come out before games and gentle taps on his stick hopefully result in a favorable outcome not only for himself, but for the Barons. What his teammates may not realize is Grant's magic rocks aren't just for his own use. He's been known to give a few taps to his teammates, too. His method is a closely guarded secret.

A three-point night for someone? Magic rocks. A shutout for the goalie? Magic rocks. A shootout winner? Magic rocks.

It doesn't stop there for the left winger. Barons fans recently had the opportunity to name Grant's stick. No, it wasn't just a one-time thing. It started as a joke while getting that morning coffee at the beginning of the year and like most "routines," Grant's play has resulted in every stick being named this season. Needless to say, Shoeless Joe Jackson would be proud.

The first two sticks were Cornelius and Dave. Contest winner Derek Jweid named the latest one Sherman. Sometimes they only last a shift, but Otto and Pedro have stuck around for some time now. As long as Grant's on a roll, Ernie (that was No. 3) may get Bert as a buddy by the end of the year.

Whenever that time comes, one thing is for certain. Not much changes between now and then.



Despite severe weather conditions — including multiple snowstorms — pushing back the opening date until later this summer, construction continues on the new structure at the Amateur Softball Association of America's Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Photo courtesy of Amateur Softball Association of America

Making a Good Thing Better

By Cassie Gage

Welcome home, softball fans.

The well-known quote from the 1989 motion picture *Field of Dreams* says, “If you build it, he will come.” Well, they built it and today people are still coming from all over the United States,

Canada and even the world; they come to Oklahoma City summer for several days of the best college softball action in the country.

As more fans continue to attend the Women's College World Series annually, the facility at which it is held is constantly pushed to its maximum occupancy. It is a great problem to have and one event organizers have addressed once and continue to closely monitor, evaluating all options as they move forward.

Sitting on nearly 42 acres of land, the Amateur Softball Association complex houses the organization's headquarters, the National Softball Hall of Fame and Museum and four fields. The complex is the site for not only the Women's

College World Series but several high-profile slow- and fast-pitch softball events each year. The organization moved to Oklahoma City in the early 1980s after being based in Newark, N.J.

The Oklahoma City All Sports Association, the ASA and the University of Oklahoma first brought the Women's College World Series to Oklahoma City in 1990, and the tournament has had a permanent home almost every year since. The only year during that span when the tournament wasn't held at Hall



The new facility will enhance the existing structures at the complex by providing a meeting space with rest room access, as well as public rest rooms.

Photo courtesy of Amateur Softball Association of America

of Fame was 1996, when the site was moved to Columbus, Georgia, the softball site for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. This season marks the 20th anniversary of the Women’s College World Series in Oklahoma City.

“It’s such a smooth operation now,” said Mark Loehrs, the ASA’s chief financial officer. “The University of Oklahoma, the All Sports Association, the ASA and the city have worked together and have a lot invested in the event. Without each of those organization’s volunteers and using resources each has available, the Women’s College World Series wouldn’t happen. It takes everyone.”

The original stadium field opened in 1987 and featured permanent seating for 2,046. The main stadium field also featured a press box and VIP room. The entire complex sat on just 19 acres of land. The land the facility is located on is owned by the City of Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma City Zoological Trust. The ASA leases the land from the city and, as a result, the city can invest in the land since it owns the property.

“All of the land is owned by Oklahoma City or

the Zoo Trust,” said Loehrs. “As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the ASA is the caretaker of the facility, and we provide the maintenance. It’s a tremendous investment for us. We put \$2.5 million of our own money into the renovations, and if we ever left Oklahoma City, we can’t take it with us since we don’t own the land. We’re invested in the city and committed to remaining here for years to come.”

The first year of the stadium saw just fewer than 9,000 fans attend events there. Today, more than 60,000 people walk through the gates on an annual basis just for the Women’s College World Series. The permanent seating area holds more than 5,000 seats. Longtime fans and media members familiar with Hall of Fame Stadium know that the transformation is remarkable.

Organizers of the tournament, including Oklahoma City All Sports Association Executive Director Tim Brassfield, know the increase in attendance is a positive sign of the event’s outreach. The goal is to continue to bring in those fans from out of state and reach out to the state of Oklahoma to

bring in more fans.

“The attendance at the Women’s College World Series continues to increase,” Brassfield said. “With the construction renovation completed in 2003, the number of permanent seats increased by 3,000. It only took us three years to sell that out. We’re bringing in 3,000 additional seats in the outfield, and it’s still filled to capacity.

“Eighty-seven percent of the people who attend the Women’s College World Series are from out of state. Oklahoma City has become the destination for college softball much like Omaha has for baseball’s College World Series,” Brassfield added. “We believe that a consistent growth for the event rests in our local community. We want the people who live here to attend this event, especially the championship series.”

While the need for more space has grown, Hall of Fame Stadium’s neighbors have provided support for the facility. The area where the stadium is located, along the Interstate 35 and Interstate 44 crossing, is known as the Adventure District.

Thanks to the efforts of the late Stanley Draper

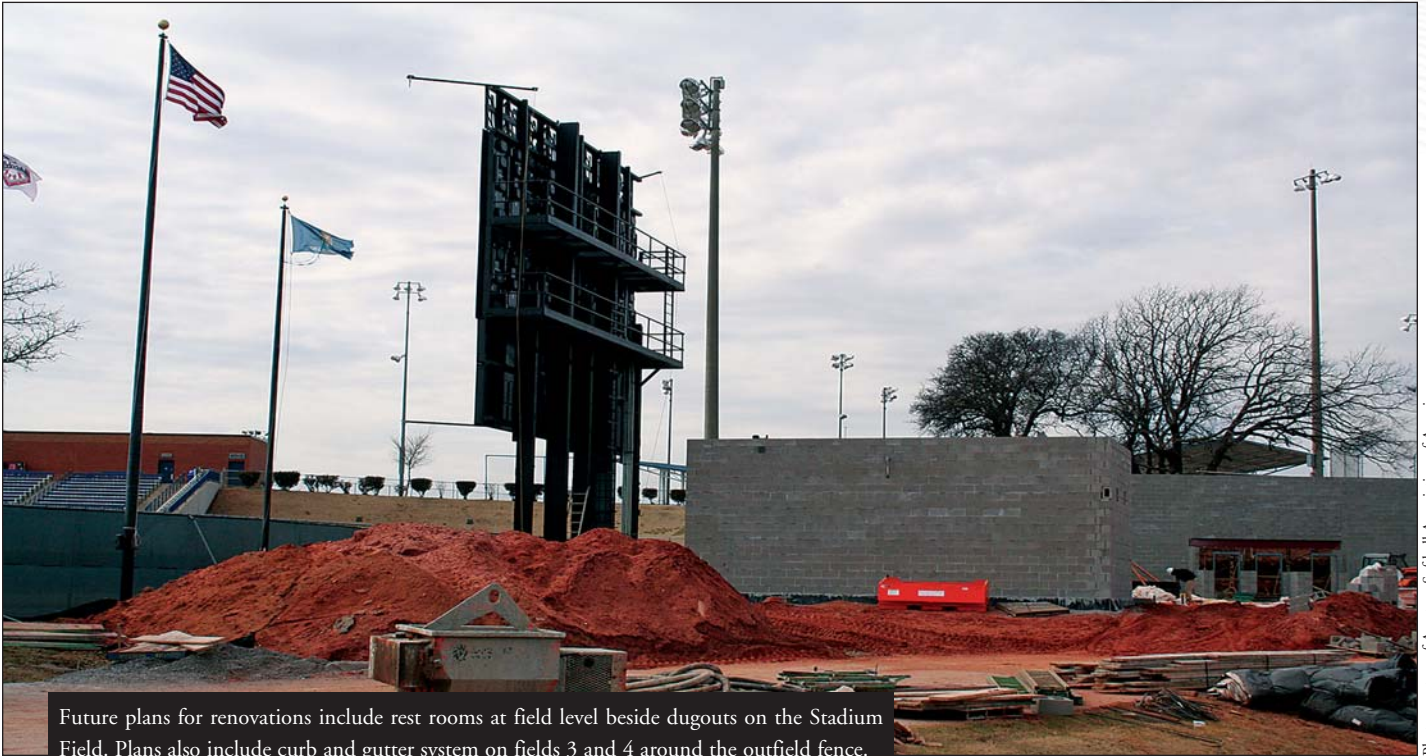


Photo courtesy of Amateur Softball Association of America

Future plans for renovations include rest rooms at field level beside dugouts on the Stadium Field. Plans also include curb and gutter system on fields 3 and 4 around the outfield fence.

Jr., former executive director of the Oklahoma City All Sports Association, and others, the dream of creating a softball haven became reality. In October 2000, the citizens of Oklahoma City passed a bond issue allocating funds for a complete facelift of the Don E. Porter Hall of Fame Complex.

Not only have coaches, organizers and participants noticed the changes in the facility, so have the fans. Shelley Prather of El Paso, Texas, has been attending the Women's College World Series since 1999. While the event has become an annual reunion for her family, it started out as a graduation gift for her niece, and she continues to come back year after year.

"The expansion has made it possible for more fans to enjoy this great event," Prather said. "The parking lot expansion has been an added bonus. Oklahoma City is such a great host for this event because of the venue and the city's central location and friendly residents. I have made friends with a few local residents and look forward to visiting annually."

Renovations began in July 2002 and among the changes were 519 additional parking spaces and the construction of a new Hall of Fame Plaza and Sports Festival Esplanade. Today, the 300-foot long, 40-foot wide Esplanade is full of vendor tents and Fan Fest activities during the Women's College World Series and other large tournaments.

In addition to the changes outside the fences,

changes were made inside. An additional 3,000 permanent seats were added along the first base and third base sides to increase the stadium seating capacity to 5,000. New bathrooms were added, along with a new upper concourse connecting the north fields with the concessions and bathrooms.

The first phase of the renovation was complete in May 2003, with the second phase beginning shortly after. During the next stage, two new fields with lighting and covered concrete stadium seating were constructed west of the existing complex. Permanent seating was also added to the north field.

"It's been amazing to see the changes that have happened at the stadium during the past decade," said Jenni Carlson, a columnist from *The Daily Oklahoman* who has covered the event for the past several years. "I remember the days of the grass berms, and while it was sad to see those areas replaced by permanent seating, it was needed progress. The continued improvement to seating, concessions, parking, team areas and so many other facets of the park has been crucial for the teams participating and the fans enjoying the games. Is it the perfect, finished product? I don't think anyone would say that. But the combination of the facility, the fans and the organizers makes Hall of Fame Stadium the perfect home for the Women's College World Series. The NCAA could look high and low and not find a better fit."

The addition of the fields benefits the larger tournaments held at the site. There is adequate seating and electronic scoreboards located at each. They also provide Women's College World Series teams with a quality practice area.

In all, the expansion cost about \$5 million, with \$3.5 million coming as a result of the initial bond issued passed in 2000. The remaining \$1.5 million was approved by the ASA board of directors to add the new fields.

"We embarked on the expansion to add more seats, additional parking spaces and two additional fields," Radigonda added. "The upgrade was dramatic. It turned into a positive situation for us. The additional fields serve as practice fields for the Women's College World Series and allow us to host larger events here. By bringing those events here, we feel that we're returning the investment on the facility."

The old scoreboard was replaced in 2008. The new board is more energy-efficient and uses an LED lighting system to show high-quality videos, photos and other images. The board also has the capability to be segmented into different areas for a variety of uses.

"The new, larger scoreboard lends a high-quality professional perspective to the events, both national and international," said Rayburn Hesse from SPY Softball. "Not only are players identified, but replays on the large screen are valued by the media



©2009 Shane Bevel/NCAA Photos

Fans keep coming back to ASA Hall of Fame Stadium year after year.

and public, as well as the teams. I've been to almost every park in the country and the scoreboard operation at Hall of Fame is one of the best."

The stadium personnel also added a television booth, showing just how much the sport has grown. Not only is the Women's College World Series among the annual events to air on ESPN, the network also televises numerous college games throughout the season and World Cup action in the summer.

Among the newest additions is a meeting facility located behind the stadium field. The facility is set to be completed later this summer and features team rooms, umpire rooms and rest rooms. It will accommodate team meetings and serve as a base for the large number of umpires on hand during numerous events at the facility. The facility was funded by another bond issue, again passed by the citizens of Oklahoma City.

Organizers continue to see an increase in attendance each year in Oklahoma City. When evaluating plans for the future, everyone agrees additional permanent seating is high on the list.

"There is great conversation going on between all

of the local organizations involved with trying to replicate what was done in Omaha," Radigonda said. "We'd love to keep the event here. We have a plan in place to add more permanent seating to the current facility. We had to turn away people during the Friday night session last year because the fire marshal wouldn't allow more people in. We recognize that and see our numbers continue to grow and need to improve with that."

In addition to the permanent seating, additional plans include upgrading the media facilities and adding bathrooms to the dugouts.

"We certainly hope this event is here in the future," Brassfield added. "We have plans to expand the stadium to somewhere between 9,000-12,000 seats. The event can grow and be successful here."

As the popularity of the sport grows, so does the number of events being held at the complex. As a result, the ASA continues to evaluate needs for the facility.

"We have seen an increase in youth fastpitch teams," Sebren said. "The exposure we get on national television during the Women's College

World Series is more than 50 hours. Seeing competition at that level encourages young girls to play the sport. There are more opportunities out there for young ladies now, and we as an organization realize the need to provide a venue that's growing as the sport does."

With a strong commitment from the organizing parties and the citizens of Oklahoma City, it's evident all are willing to do whatever it takes to make Hall of Fame Stadium the ultimate road-trip stop for college sports fans all over the world.

"Our active sporting events show a community moving forward," Brassfield added. "We are continuing to grow, not only with our NBA team, but we continue to bring in various Big 12 events, the All-College Classic and the Women's College World Series. We're planning on bidding for future NCAA events. The economic impact of these events can be off the charts. There is energy in Oklahoma City. It's an exciting place to live, work and visit."

And organizers hope Hall of Fame Stadium continues to grow as the sport does.

After all, there is no place like home.