



# PRESERVATION TODAY



**The Historic  
Miami Marine Stadium**  
*Rebirth of an icon?*

**2009**

# The Future of the Miami Marine Stadium



*Rendering of Miami Marine Stadium Courtesy of Hilario Candela*

*By Nina Weber Worth and Don Worth*

The marvelous potential of the Marine Stadium is best expressed by Rod Glaubman, co-founder of Pace Concerts, which was one of the nation's largest music programmers. Rod produced over 25 events at the Marine Stadium and even played bass at concerts there for the Miami Philharmonic. Here's what he said:

"I have been involved with concert presentations throughout Europe, the Caribbean, the United States and Canada. In all of the 15,000 events I have seen or produced, I have NEVER seen a facility with more eye appeal and magic than the Marine Stadium. I have seen producers, cities, governments and architects around the world TRY and create the magic that the Marine Stadium already HAS."

Since February 2008, our working group, Friends of Marine Stadium, now under the umbrella of Dade Heri-

tage Trust, has been tackling not only the preservation issue but also the necessity of finding the right management fit and a diverse group of end uses. After rounds of talks with many different promoters and event organizers we conclude that the future of the Marine Stadium isn't just good...it's terrific. Below are some potential uses:

## CONCERTS

The Stadium is perhaps known best for the many concerts held there. After speaking with many concert promoters, we have learned several important things. First, the size of the Marine Stadium---approximately 6,500 seats---is considered an ideal size---the "sweet spot" in concert lingo---and there are only a few venues this size in Miami. Broader trends in entertainment currently put a premium on live performance because performers find making money

by recorded music increasingly difficult due to the internet.

Local promoters have responded with great enthusiasm. The Rhythm Foundation, which has a twenty-one year track record bringing Latin and World Music to South Florida, is a vital supporter. Fort Lauderdale-based NYK Concerts, which produces concerts around the world with performers such as Placido Domingo and Julio Iglesias, also looks forward to programming events at the Marine Stadium. Other local promoters who have expressed a strong interest in programming at the Marine Stadium include the Kiwanis Club of Little Havana, Soula Booking and Lance-O.

We will continue working to introduce the Stadium to other groups.

## ATHLETIC EVENTS

As America becomes more health

conscious, large scale, participatory “fitness” events are everywhere. The Marine Stadium, with its versatility, natural setting and proximity to Miami, has the potential to become a world-class athletic venue.

Already, Excel Productions has produced several successful triathlons at the Marine Stadium site. The Miami Triathlon, after only two years, is extraordinarily successful and last year saw 1500 entrants. The Basin—with its protected body of water, easy transition from swimming to biking, and running trails on site—is considered one of the greatest triathlon courses in the world. In fact, 70 percent of a modern-day triathlon could be seen from the stadium. Excel Productions plans to increase the number of triathlons at the Marine Stadium site and ultimately to utilize the stadium seating.

Dragon Boat Racing is the fastest growing outdoor spectator sport in the world. The highly-regarded Miami Dragon Boat Club holds annual, multi-tiered events at the Marine Stadium site with audiences in the thousands.

The Miami Rowing Club, having produced many successful events in the past at the Marine Stadium, plans to hold major masters and high school rowing regattas.

Swimming competitions can also be held at the Marine Stadium.

Finally, Team Row, Inc., an organization that teaches young adults how to row, hopes to use the Marine Stadium during off-peak hours.

#### LOCATION SHOOTING

*Miami Vice*, *Burn Notice*, *The Fast and the Furious*— from movies to television to fashion shoots—location shooting is now considered an important

economic engine in the revitalization of South Florida.

The iconic beauty of the Marine Stadium is the ultimate great visual of Miami. In fact, the Stadium has already been the setting for an Elvis Presley movie, *Clambake*. Location scouts such as Christina LaBuzetta (*CSI Miami*, *The Fast and the Furious*) can't wait to use the Marine Stadium.

The potential of the Marine Stadium has already been enthusiastically discussed by both the City of Miami Arts and Entertainment Council and the Production Industry Council of Miami Beach.

#### POWER BOAT RACING

The Marine Stadium was originally built for power boat racing. In fact, it is the only man-made stadium in the United States (that we know of) that was constructed for this purpose.

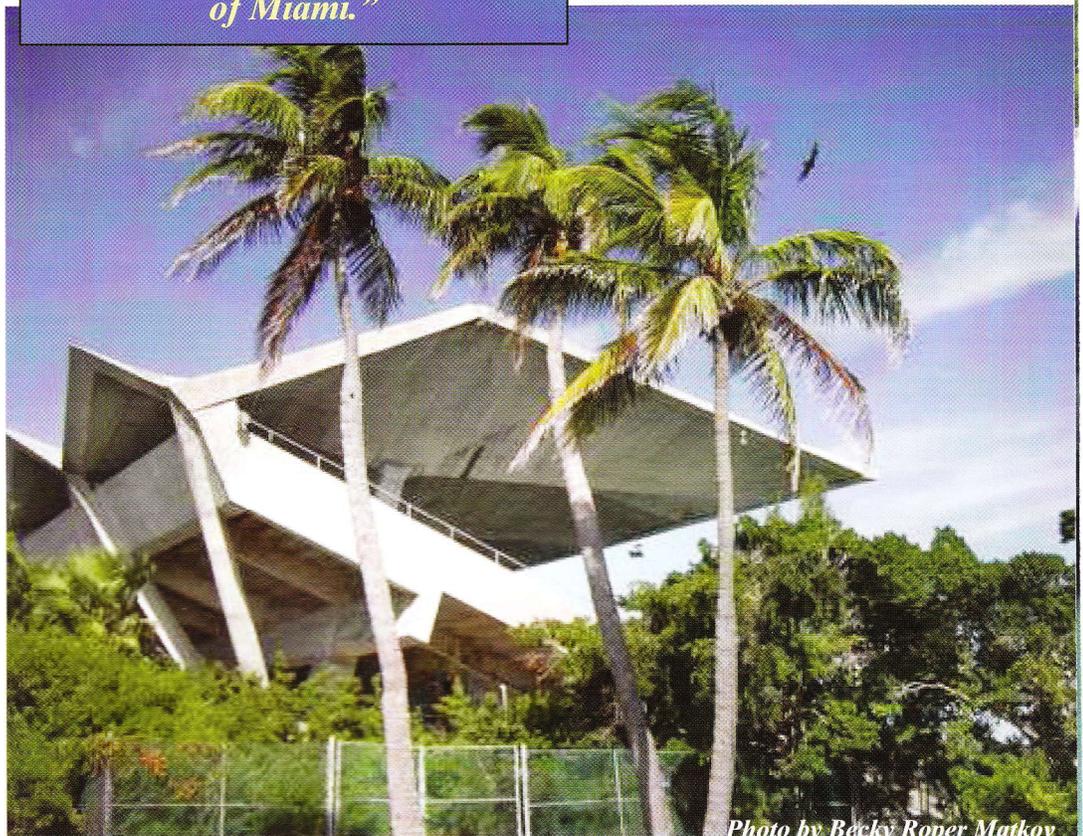
Power boat racing groups are quite anxious to return to the Marine Stadium. One association, the F1 Champboat Series, would like to return in February 2010 to host a weekend of racing at the Stadium basin and have temporary grandstands erected to the east of the Stadium.

The F1 Champboat series not only is a nationally televised event but plans are underway to make a documentary about the restoration of the Marine Stadium. Other power boat racing associations have also expressed interest in coming back to Miami: the American Power Boat Association, the American Boat Racing Association, and the Unlimited Hydroplane Racing Association.

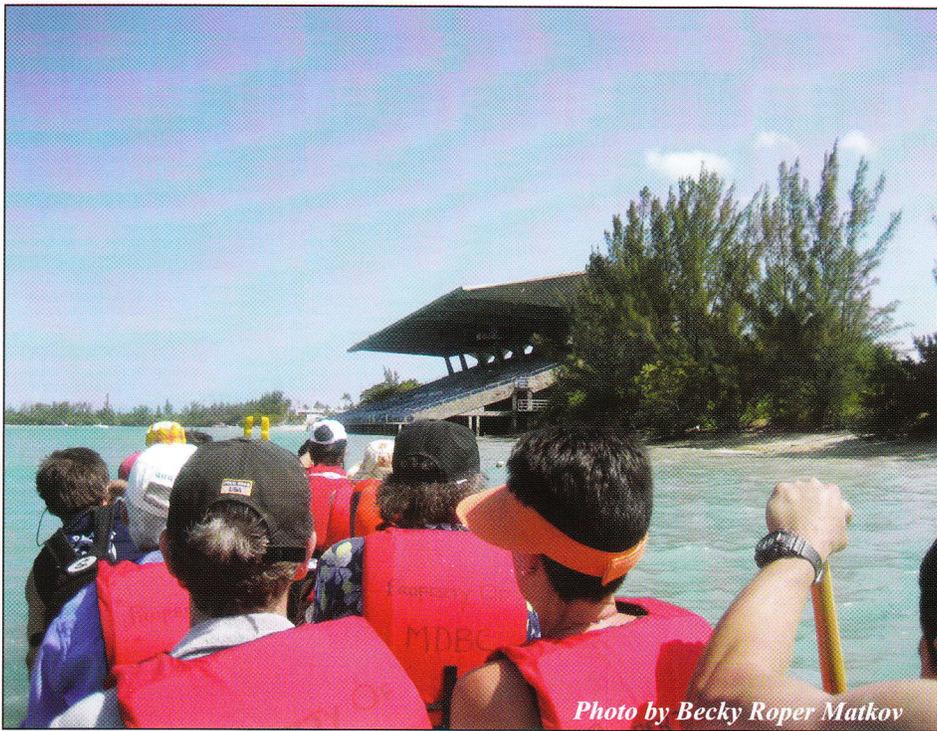
#### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

We have not overlooked the issues of the environment and compatible uses. Boat racing will not take place in the basin if it is environmentally unacceptable.

*“The iconic beauty of the Marine Stadium is the ultimate great visual of Miami.”*



*Photo by Becky Romer Matkov*



*Photo by Becky Roper Matkov*

Preliminary conversations with the Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM ) revealed that issues such as manatee protection can be mitigated through spotters. We recognize that the Marine Stadium basin is primarily for passive, natural use and the City has established a “no wake” zone that protects its many users, such as rowers and dragon boaters. Boat races are typically two day events that would take place over several weekends per year. Also, it is possible to “marry” boat racing with dragon boat and sculling races by featuring these activities in their own races during boat racing weekends. In this way, these “natural” sports can be introduced to a whole new market of potential users and viewers.

The re-introduction of boat racing allows the Marine Stadium to serve a large market of interested people. but it must be done carefully.

As Steve David, a boat racer (current Unlimited Hydroplane National Driving Champion) and government official (current Commissioner of the Port Everglades

and past member of the City of Pompano Beach Planning and Zoning Board) summed it up, “When the Marine Stadium was effective, it was supported by an unusual coalition of scullers, environmentalists, boat racers and concert fans.” Festivals now combine disparate events in creative ways. For example, the highly successful Board Up Miami, held this winter at the Marine Stadium site, featured a wakeboard competition (using powerboats), long distance swimming competitions and dragon boat racing. Thousands attended.

#### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Of all of the activities that can be held at the Marine Stadium, “special events” have the potential to be a grand slam for our community.

Bruce Orosz, President of Act Productions, one of the most highly regarded special event companies in South Florida, believes that Miami is sorely lacking in family entertainment and there is tremendous potential for water shows, such as the Cirque De Soleil show “O” in Las Vegas. James Quinlan, board chairman of the Rhythm Foundation, believes that Vancouver’s wildly successful Celebration of Light Festival,

which features fireworks synchronized to classical music, would be terrific.

At our January 2009 “State of the Stadium Event”, we had a presentation by Waltzing Waters, a company that builds “liquid fireworks” (water fountains) where the displays can also be lighted and set to music. Other suggested events include air races (see Red Bull Air Races) ancillary events for Art Basel and the Super Bowl, live theatrical productions, boxing and wrestling (the trainer Angelo Dundee produced fight nights in 1972). The possibilities seem infinite.

#### **MANAGEMENT AND FINANCING**

While this article focuses on potential uses of the Marine Stadium, there are two other issues crucial to its restoration and success: Management and Financing.



*Aerial view of the Miami Marine Stadium. Courtesy of Rick Bravo*

The Marine Stadium was managed by the City of Miami from 1964 to 1992, when it was closed after Hurricane Andrew. This is not a model for the future. The Stadium must be managed by an experienced, professional organization that understands not just facility maintenance, but marketing and management and has the ability to attract national acts. The organization must also be able to work with local organizations and promoters described in this article. Friends of Marine Stadium is constantly working to encourage interest from appropriate entities and educate them to the possibilities.

Financing is the second key issue. The City of Miami's Engineering Study of July, 2008, estimated restoration costs for Marine Stadium

(not including parking requirements) at \$30 million. Friends of Marine Stadium secured grants for Dade Heritage Trust to fund a follow up engineering study by Simpson Gum-pertz & Heger and Structural Preservation Systems to more closely focus on the specific needs and costs of concrete restoration. Support included \$20,000 from The World Monuments Fund, \$15,000 from The Villagers, Inc., \$12,500 from the John and Selene Devaney Charitable Foundation, \$5,000 from The National Trust for Historic Preservation and \$5,000 from the Office of Miami-Dade County Commissioner Carlos Gimenez. The final cost estimate of restoration may differ from the City's estimate.

While this cost sounds substantial

(the Stadium was constructed for \$1 million in 1964 and it could have been repaired for \$2—\$3 million in 1993), it should be considered in today's context. During the last few years, the Miami Community has invested in significant new structures---the Miami Art Museum, the Science Museum, the Performing Arts Center, the New World Symphony space, and the new Marlins Stadium. These facilities, which provide amenities for residents and help Miami achieve "world class city" status, have costs ranging from \$150 million to over \$500 million each.

Restoration of the Marine Stadium will cost only a fraction and provide our community with a with a priceless, unique and stately icon that we can realistically say will rival



For updates and to receive emails go to [www.marinestadium.org](http://www.marinestadium.org)

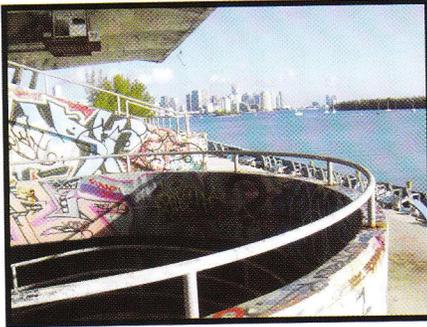


Photo courtesy of Harry Emilio Gottlieb

great structures such as the Sydney Opera House.

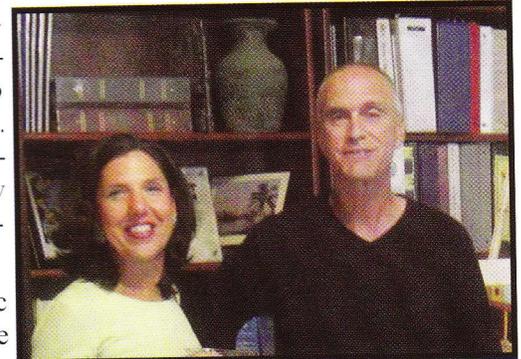
Given the current budgetary crisis affecting all municipalities, we realize we must be creative. We have been analyzing a host of alternative sources including the sale of historic tax credits, naming rights, fundraising, cross subsidy opportunities and various dedicated government sources of funding. We feel confident that with a strategic operating plan, we will raise the necessary funds.

#### MOVING FORWARD

When we began reviewing feasibility issues of the Miami Marine Stadium, we weren't sure what we would find. No one wants a failure. We have been extraordinarily gratified with the response. At our January 10, 2009 "State of the Stadium Event" held at the Miami Rowing Club, we had 15 experienced promoters and event organizers speak to an audience of almost 200 including two City of Miami Commissioners and one Miami-Dade County Commissioner.

You can read their remarks by going to the "Latest News" section of our website, [www.marinestadium.org](http://www.marinestadium.org), update of February 2, 2008. Anyone who saw that presentation came away thoroughly convinced of the Marine Stadium's viability.

The Marine Stadium is not just a significant structure, but a unique public gathering space that reflects the essence of Miami. We have a remarkable opportunity to re-invent something wildly special. If this community pulls together, we can do it.



*Nina and Don Worth*  
*Don is the Founder of Friends of Marine Stadium and a DHT Trustee.*

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