

# Behind the Scenes ..

by Ross Hollebon

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BALTIMORE RAVENS



## Team Roster

Preparations for the Ravens' preseason and regular season home games are a year-round endeavor that involve not only Ravens' staff but many additional businesses as well. "Most of the people we deal with are third-party stadium partners," says Roy Sommerhof, vice president of stadium operations.

The primary roster of M&T Bank Stadium partners includes seven organizations: S.A.F.E. Management (ushers, ticket takers and guards), ARAMARK (food service operations), Central Parking System (parking operations), the non-profit organization Chimes (cleaning operations), the Baltimore City Police (security), the Maryland

Stadium Authority (building maintenance) and Facility Merchandise, Inc. (non-consumable merchandise).

During the course of a game, there are about 2,500 individuals working for these organizations "in the building or just outside the building," says Sommerhof, whose three-person stadium operations department manages all of the Ravens' stadium partner relationships, except retail operations.

Baker Koppelman, vice president of ticket sales and operations, oversees customer service for the 8,200 fans who watch the game from club level. Kim Ferguson, manager of customer service, and her team of five concierges assist in everything from locating a fan's favorite food to providing directions. "We're focused on customer service," says Koppelman.

To staff the impressive list of outlets within the stadium where food is sold and/or served (including 44 permanent concessions stands, 95 portable outlets, 126 suites and 35 outdoor hospitality tents), ARAMARK needs approximately 150 in-seat refreshment hawkers and 1,200 game-day concession workers.

During a typical game, this small army serves 8,150 hot dogs along with

## The Business of Football

*It takes a village to produce an NFL game*

**O**n any given Sunday, more than 71,000 football fans fill Baltimore's M&T Bank Stadium to watch the Baltimore Ravens take on their National Football League rivals. What they see is 22 men on the field battling for victory, hoping for the final touchdown that will add another win to the team's record. What they do not see, however, are the months, weeks and days of preparation it takes to get to kickoff. \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately 3,500 full-time and game-day staff members are involved in providing fans with a top-notch game day experience. Whether it's the food they eat, the merchandise they buy or the places they park, the Ravens want their fans to leave the stadium happy—even if the team loses.

Kevin Byrne, senior vice president of public and community relations for the Ravens, has worked for the NFL for 32 years and has been fortunate enough to work at the Super Bowl, where, he says "you try to serve the most [fans] in the best way you can." It's a goal the Ravens' staff strive to achieve at every game. "We try to copy a Super Bowl [level of service] even for a preseason game," Byrne says.



5,950 pounds of French fries. In a nod to hometown fare, fans purchase more than 1,200 crab cakes, washing it down with 6,850 gallons of soda—enough liquid to fill an above-ground pool—and 15,000 bottles of water kept cold by 45,000 pounds of ice.

“Many of the people who work the stands for ARAMARK are volunteers working for church organizations or other groups,” says Sommerhof, adding there are approximately 1,200 part-time or game-day concession workers. “It’s a really good opportunity for these groups to make some additional money for their cause.”

### Give Me an “R”

Game-day marketing includes various entertainment and specialty groups.

Founded in 1947 as the Baltimore Colts’ Marching Band, the current Baltimore’s Marching Ravens Band is the largest musical organization associated with the NFL with more than 300 musicians, flagline, color guard and equipment crew.

The only professional sports team with co-ed cheerleaders, the Ravens’ cheerleading squads utilize dance and stunt teams comprised of 40 women and 20 men. High demand for appearances by the group created the Playmakers, 18 women who greet fans at the stadium and also make special appearances during the week.

As much as fans enjoy Poe, the Ravens oversized avian mascot, a pair



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BALTIMORE RAVENS

leads from Oriole Park to M&T Bank Stadium and contains a pre-game tailgate area complete with activities, face painting, children’s games, a Game Day Auction area (a silent auction of autographed Ravens items and other collectibles) and assorted promotions teams spread throughout the stadium pre-game, during and post-game.

Koppelman also manages the Ravens’ relationship with Facility Merchandising, Inc., which sells licensed team gear at 17 Ravens team stores and portable locations through-out M&T Bank Stadium. “We rely on them for all the nuts-

running back Ray Rice has swung jersey sales to the offensive side. Currently, the \$92 jerseys from these two players are the stadium’s most popular products. Combined with the assortment of T-shirts, hats and other items, team merchandise brings in \$100,000 per game.

### Lights, Camera, Action

Reaching fans before and after the game (and at home during the game) is the job of Ravens Media Services Coordinator Karen McGee. Writers and broadcasters from local and national radio and television

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of live birds has gotten even more attention. The ravens, named Rise and Conquer, perform at all Baltimore Ravens’ home games with their handlers.

Stadium staff provide a tailgate experience for fans who left their grills (and RVs) at home. Outside of the stadium, the AAA Ravens Walk

The current **Baltimore Marching Ravens Band** is the largest musical organization associated with the NFL.

and-bolts work to make it happen, but we’re there to give them advice and market their products as best we can,” he says.

For years the Ravens’ defensive stars, such as Ray Lewis, Turrell Suggs and safety Ed Reed, topped the list of most popular jerseys. But the rising popularity of quarterback Joe Flacco and

networks, sports websites and print publications converge in the press box and on the field to cover the action from sideline to sideline.

McGee is the gatekeeper for the weekly process that provides game-day credentials for 875 to 1,000 individuals, depending on the game. “The number really varies based on whether the game is a national





telecast against a certain opponent or a 1 p.m start against a different opponent,” McGee says.

Between 60 and 65 individuals hold season-long credentials, with the largest contingents representing *The Baltimore Sun* and Comcast SportsNet Baltimore.

The weekly television broadcast group also makes up a sizable portion of the game-day media, with the number of credential requests varying based on the size of the group and its production crew. ESPN



may request nearly 300 credentials for a Monday Night Football broadcast while CBS comes closer to 125 requests for their regional game coverage.

The Ravens are committed to ensuring that the media have exactly what they need so that they can “do

their job the best they can,” Byrne says. “There are a lot of staff members [in the press box] on game days. We have upwards of 50 people servicing the media.”

Byrne’s assistants arrange the press box three to four hours before each game, creating seating charts to ensure each credentialed member of the media has a place to sit. During the game, they hand-deliver updated statistics after each quarter of play and are available to fulfill any special media requests. A press box play-by-play announcer feeds the media details of the game, including the down and distance of plays, the players involved in plays and official injury updates issued by the teams’ public relations representatives.

But Byrne knows that it pays to do more than just push stats and scores. On game day he makes his rounds to provide a personal touch to as many guests as possible. “Within three hours, I’ve shaken over 100 hands,” he says. Those hands include anyone from CBS game announcers Jim Nantz and Phil Simms to defensive coordinator Chuck Pagano to General Manager Ozzie Newsome, as well as all of the national reporters on site. “It’s an amazing number of people who you run into who have some function [connected] with the game on game day,” Byrne says.

## It's a Win

The morning of the game, the Baltimore Ravens players and coaches wake up at the team’s home hotel in Baltimore, where their accommodations have been arranged by Bob Eller, vice president of operations. His team is also responsible for making team travel arrangements for road games and for overseeing operations at the team’s 200,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art training facility. Eller counts on multiple travel partners, including Delta airlines and numerous bus companies, to help him get the work done. “There are a lot of different vendors and personnel that you really depend on,” says Eller. “You develop relationships over the years and eventually all the little parts add up to hopefully a smooth operation.”

In the end though, it’s up to the 53 active roster Ravens players to do their jobs and execute the game plan prepared by Head Coach John Harbaugh and his staff so they can add another “W” to the record books. ■

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## 2010 FAN POWER!

### Ravens at Home

Home games

8

Total attendance

569,817 fans

Home game average attendance

71,227 fans

### Ravens Away

Away games

8

Total attendance

553,619 fans

Away game average attendance

69,202 fans

Source: ESPN