



## Craig Brush guest column: It's been a great 10 years at Germain Arena

By By CRAIG BRUSH, Florida Everblades president and general manager

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ESTERO — Ten years ago today, Germain Arena opened its doors with a hockey game between the Florida Everblades and the Charlotte Checkers.

While I do not remember a lot about the game (we did win) I do remember being overwhelmed with pride looking at the packed house that night. I had the same feeling a couple of months later when Elton John came to town and performed his magic.

When Peter Karmanos, Tom Thewes and I said we were going to build an arena and bring a hockey team here, there was no shortage of raised eyebrows. But thanks to the great people of Southwest Florida, here we are 10 years later.

I would like to say it has been a easy ride, but that would not be true. We have faced the same kinds of problems that any small business does — staffing issues, rising health care expenses, dramatic increases in energy costs and insurance premiums, and today a severe economic downturn. But through it all we have stuck to our vision of providing affordable family entertainment and recreational activities for all ages.

We want people to look forward to coming to Germain Arena and hope they leave with a smile on their faces.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors, suiteholders and all of our season ticket holders for their support, especially those who have been with us from inception. I would also like to thank our dedicated staff, who spend countless hours preparing the building for the various events we host. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Kyle, who has been with me every step of this 10-year journey. Our food and beverage operation is her responsibility, and her job is far more difficult than mine.

A lot of great things have happened at the arena over the last 10 years, but there is still one big check mark yet to be made on the to-do list: We have to get that Kelly Cup.

This year's team has all the ingredients to accomplish that goal — a driven coach, All-Star talent and a great work ethic.

Come out and cheer them on.

You will not be disappointed.

*Craig Brush, Peter Karmanos and the late Thomas Thewes formed KTB Sports Inc. and built what is now Germain Arena 10 years ago. Brush is team president and general manager of the Florida Everblades hockey team, the building's main tenant.*

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