

## Coca-Cola Arena: Game Day from the Ground Up



**6 February 2026 (Dubai, UAE)** – Having completed more than 500 events earlier this year, Coca-Cola Arena is entering a defining phase in its evolution as a strategic sporting and entertainment asset. Last night, the Arena hosted one of the most iconic teams in global sport, Real Madrid, as they faced the city's home franchise, Dubai Basketball. More than a marquee fixture, the game and Dubai Basketball's home victory marked a significant milestone for the venue, its owner Dubai Holding, its operator Legends Global, and the wider sporting ecosystem in the region.

Welcoming Real Madrid to Dubai placed Coca-Cola Arena at the centre of a highly visible moment for global sport. With sporting ministers, senior government stakeholders, league executives, global celebrities, and influential figures from across sport, media, and culture in attendance alongside one of the world's most recognisable basketball institutions, the occasion underscored the Arena's operational maturity, international credibility, and ability to deliver elite competition on a global stage.

### **Built With a Vision for the Pinnacle of Basketball**

From the earliest planning stages, the vision for Coca-Cola Arena was clear: to deliver exceptional fan experiences while being capable of hosting the very best teams in the world. That vision extended beyond one off events, focusing instead on longevity, flexibility, and the ability to support elite sport at scale.

As **Gary Thomas, Senior Vice President – Technical & Design at Legends Global (Asia Pacific & Middle East)**, explained:

“Coca-Cola Arena started with a promise and a long-term commitment to build a truly multipurpose venue, one that went beyond music concerts and was ready for the future of sport. From day one, the design philosophy was about longevity and flexibility: being ready not just to host exhibition sport, but to become a true home for franchise teams. We knew sports would come to the region and we understood the importance of being ready. With its dynamic capabilities and state-of-the-art design, we believe our venue has become the envy of the



EuroLeague. Every element of the building was engineered for world-class events and international live broadcasting, from expansive loading docks and highly functional back-of-house spaces for performers and teams, to broadcast-ready infrastructure, elite lighting systems, and premium kitchens capable of serving thousands of fans and partners at the highest level. This venue was designed to accommodate all possibilities, and today it's delivering exactly what it was built for."

Six and a half years on, that vision is being realised. Coca-Cola Arena is no longer simply a host venue. It is an established platform for elite basketball, trusted by international franchises and governing bodies alike.

### **A Venue That Delivers, Visually and Operationally**

Coca-Cola Arena's iconic facade has become an increasingly familiar presence in global sports content, reflecting its growing international profile. Lighting the facade to mark major partnerships and moments has become a signature visual expression, transforming the building itself into part of the storytelling and reinforcing its place within Dubai's sporting identity.

Behind the scenes, sustained in house investment has ensured the Arena is technically and operationally equipped for world class competition. This includes a world class basketball court, elite sports lighting, and advanced audiovisual systems designed to meet international production standards. These assets have enabled the Arena to operate as a genuine partner to Dubai Basketball, alleviating many of the pressures typically faced by a start up franchise and establishing professional standards from day one.

Equally important is operational agility. Dedicated technical teams can convert the venue from a live entertainment configuration into a full basketball setup within five to six hours, a capability that reflects precision planning, experience, and venue maturity.

### **The Franchise Venue Partnership Model**

At the heart of Coca-Cola Arena's basketball strategy is a deliberate shift from event led hosting to a franchise venue partnership model. As the permanent home of Dubai Basketball, the Arena has moved beyond the traditional landlord role, functioning instead as an operational, technical, and experiential extension of the team.

This philosophy is reflected in how the venue operates on game day and beyond. As **Mark Jan Kar, General Manager of Coca-Cola Arena**, noted:

"What defines Coca-Cola Arena today is not just what we host, but how consistently we deliver at the highest level. Welcoming a club of Real Madrid's stature is a powerful validation of the standards we've built, operationally, technically, and culturally. From game-day readiness and fan experience to broadcast delivery and athlete welfare, every department works in sync to ensure world-class sport is presented flawlessly. Our role is to create an environment where teams can perform, fans can connect, and global audiences can experience Dubai at its very best. This is not a one-off moment; it's part of a long-term commitment to building a sustainable sporting home for the region."



For the franchise, this model delivers stability, consistency, and infrastructure, allowing focus to remain on performance, player development, and fan engagement. For the venue, regular fixtures create predictable scheduling, recurring audiences, and deeper commercial relationships across sponsorship, hospitality, and premium experiences.

### **Curating World Class Guest Experiences**

Audience understanding sits at the core of Coca-Cola Arena's operating philosophy. Every game day experience is shaped around how fans interact with the sport, from sightlines and seating geometry to food, beverage, and overall atmosphere.

Courtside experiences have become a defining feature of basketball at the Arena. Designed to keep attention on the action while enabling connection and networking, the courtside lounge has emerged as a focal point of game day. With fully tiered seating throughout the venue, every seat offers clear views of the court, reinforcing the Arena's commitment to immersion and engagement at every level.

### **A Blueprint for Long Term Sporting Success**

Beyond individual fixtures, Coca-Cola Arena has developed a blueprint for hosting elite basketball on a recurring basis. More importantly, it has created a platform that actively attracts global franchises and competitions aligned with the long term growth of the game in the region.

As the first venue in the MENA region to serve as the permanent home of a franchise team hosting regular league competition alongside historic global opponents, the Arena is building trust, loyalty, and a repeat fan base that extends well beyond one off events.

### **Impact by the Numbers**

The Arena's impact is already measurable and increasingly influential. In its debut 2024/25 season, Dubai Basketball has secured playoff qualification in the ABA League, underpinned by an exceptional 95 percent home win rate. The victory against Real Madrid further reinforced Coca-Cola Arena's reputation as one of the league's most challenging away environments, where venue design, crowd proximity, and atmosphere translate directly into competitive advantage.

Since its debut in September 2024, Coca-Cola Arena has welcomed more than 182,500 attendees to Dubai Basketball fixtures, including 11,900 international visitors, reinforcing the venue's role in driving inbound visitation and repeat engagement. Beyond elite competition, the Arena's community reach continues to expand, with over 30,000 school students engaged through basketball led programmes, strengthening the link between professional sport, youth participation, and long term fan development.

### **A Global Stage, Ready for What's Next**

The victory over Real Madrid marked a defining moment for Coca-Cola Arena. It was proof of concept. A clear demonstration that the venue is game day ready and capable of delivering elite sport while supporting long term commercial performance.



As the Arena continues to attract historic teams, global audiences, and long term partners, it is moving beyond moments and matches to become a commercial engine for professional sport and a long term asset within Dubai's evolving sports economy.

For more information about upcoming events visit [www.coca-cola-arena.com](http://www.coca-cola-arena.com).

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#### **ABOUT COCA-COLA ARENA**

Opened in June 2019, Coca-Cola Arena has revolutionized the live entertainment industry in the UAE and throughout the Middle East. Capable of hosting live shows 365 days a year, the fully air-conditioned, 17,000-capacity arena establishes Dubai as a major destination on the global events circuit. Coca-Cola Arena's unique automated seating design means it can be adapted to international and local events of all sizes, from international touring artists, sporting tournaments, e-gaming, comedy and live theatre and musical performances, to conferences, gala dinners, AGMs and weddings. Located in the heart of City Walk, Dubai's lifestyle destination, Coca-Cola Arena is a 15-minute drive from Dubai International Airport and a 5-minute walk from the closest Dubai Metro Station. The region's largest multipurpose indoor arena, Coca-Cola Arena is an asset of Dubai Holding entertainment portfolio and is managed by Legends Global, the world's leading venue management and services company.

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