

LA Daily News (<http://www.dailynews.com>)

Rams new and old mingle with fans at L.A. Coliseum

By Jack Wang, Los Angeles Daily News

Thursday, June 16, 2016



Andre Jeanbart kept hovering back to the table of souvenirs.

Over and over again, he wrote down his name at the Los Angeles Coliseum. He was making his mark on the silent auction, bidding for a lunch with Kevin Demoff. Finally, after his fourth try, his competitor patted him on the back and walked away.

So, why did this 43-year-old dentist from Westlake Village decide to shell out \$1,550 for a meal with the Rams chief operating officer?

“Hopefully, we get them to change these jerseys,” he said, referring to the classic blue and yellow color scheme the team has yet to adopt full time.

Jeanbart has been a Rams fan since he was a kid growing up in the San Fernando Valley. (“Ever since I knew football,” he said.) He thinks back fondly to Jim Everett’s touchdown passes. He grimaces at the mention of Georgia Frontiere. And he has long advocated for the franchise’s return, one he celebrated in January by jumping up and down in front of his television.

Take all that into account, and it’s less surprising that he might be willing to drop some change. A month earlier, he had ordered a pair of custom Rams jerseys in classic blue and yellow: A No. 20 that read “Thank You,” and a No. 16 that read “Stan Kroenke.”

On Thursday at the L.A. Coliseum, he tested them out for the first time, making sure that his cousin Hrair Apelian — No. 20 — always stood to his left. They had paid \$550 each to attend the NFL All-Access event, where Rams both past and present mingled with a few hundred lucky fans.

Everett and Vince Ferragamo threw passes in one corner of the field. Roughly twenty yards away, Wendell Tyler and Lawrence McCutcheon took pictures underneath a tent. On the far side of the field, Jared Goff waited stood in front of a white backdrop dotted with sponsor logos.

This stadium last hosted a Rams home game on Dec. 16, 1979 — a 29-14 loss to the New Orleans Saints that preceded a surprising Super Bowl run.

“It’s the same stadium it was 20, 30, 50 years ago,” Ferragamo said.

Added Tyler: “It’s like being at home.”

Rams head coach Jeff Fisher also had fond memories of the place. When he was seven or eight years old, well before he played under John Robinson at USC, he walked into the stadium for the first time. Fisher’s father had taken him to see the team play the Philadelphia Eagles. He still remembers the awe he felt walking through tunnel.

That's the old guard, however. The current generation might need a little more time to build a true connection to the place, declared a National Historic Landmark almost 32 years ago. Take Goff, for instance, who played here once during his three years at Cal. In a 38-30 loss to USC in 2014, he threw for 279 yards and three touchdowns.

He had nothing but praise for the venue, but he's only been in the away locker room. How long will it take until the Coliseum starts feeling like home?

"I'm probably going to just play a game in it," he said.

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