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## Hornets' Shinn predicts sellouts in Oklahoma City

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY -- George Shinn, owner of the [New Orleans Hornets](#), predicts they will sell out all 35 of their home games in their temporary home this season in Oklahoma City.

"This is a wonderful market," Shinn said in a Rotary Club speech Tuesday. "It is just ripe for what were trying to do."

More than 6,500 deposits have been placed on tickets since the team announced last week it will play this season in the 19,675-seat Ford Center, because the New Orleans Arena, where the Hornets normally play, was damaged by Hurricane Katrina and could take months to repair. Single-game tickets have not gone on sale yet.

Shinn said he was so shaken in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, he hadn't contemplated relocating the team until NBA Commissioner David Stern asked where the Hornets games were going to be played. Stern suggested Oklahoma City, Shinn said.

"I said, Oklahoma City? Are you kidding me?" Shinn recalled. "I'm serious. I didn't really think this would be a good market."

Other cities including Anaheim, Calif.; San Diego; Tampa, Fla.; and Nashville, Tenn., were trying to lure the Hornets, he said.

Shinn said he realized that Oklahoma City is in many ways where Charlotte, N.C., was in 1988 when he won the right to establish the Hornets franchise there.

"To me it just mirrored what went on in Charlotte where we had such success," Shinn said. "I started feeling good about it, and I realized, hey, they don't have a [major-league] team there. We would be the only show in town. So my enthusiasm kept going up."

Starting in 1988, the Charlotte Hornets sold out 364 straight games in an arena that seated more than 23,000 people. Attendance waned and the team lost money in the years before the franchise moved to New Orleans in 2003.