

Pending a positive post-event analysis of the First 4, organizers **Kent Atherton** (right) and **Jim Sperry** of Pantheon International are hopeful of making the event an annual rite of March.

the risk-reward aspect. We're a small business, so we have to be careful with our resources. If you look at the growth metrics and entertainment value, we were in front of both those trends so we knew it was worth the risk.

"Looking back, we definitely put all our experience into creating something that helped lacrosse and blew people away. One day, we'll fill that whole place. L.A. is a tough market because people have a lot of options with their free time. To have the largest crowd to see a lax game west of the Mississippi (except for a 1971 Johns Hopkins-Navy game in Houston that drew 19,000), I feel good about that."

The crowd of 7,200 that did show up at the Home Depot Center – the home of the Los Angeles Galaxy of Major League Soccer – to catch the action was energetic and gave the games a feel rivaling most postseason contests. The Pantheon people knew coaches would be pleased with an NCAA tourney atmosphere, making the First 4 a popular choice for coaches in the future.

“Watching the sport of lacrosse live, I’m a believer. Just get them out to see it live, and they will be hooked.”

—Jeff Moeller, First 4 media relations director, who saw his first live lacrosse game

"We've played in the tournament and in the final four and it was similar to that," said Kevin Corrigan, head coach of the Notre Dame squad that downed North Carolina in the opener. "It was a big-game atmosphere. There was a buzz in the crowd and it was on TV, so it was an event. It wasn't just an average game – 7,200 is a great crowd."

"The venue is tremendous," added Georgetown coach Dave Urick, whose Hoyas stunned Syracuse in the nightcap. "The crowd is right there and they are pretty enthusiastic and loud. There was definitely an atmosphere you don't get during a regular season game unless it is a big rival. For the players, it makes it more special. I don't think they will soon forget their trip."

back into the game and help it. Our guys really got into those clinics. We had goalies working with goalies, middies facing off with the kids and defensive guys teaching checks. I spoke very briefly to set the clinic up, but after that, the players just ran with it. That was definitely the right thing to do."

"We were certainly interested in helping the sport," said Atherton. "The lacrosse audience is one of the most passionate and loyal there is. If you have never seen the real game, the first time you experience the game at the top level is really interesting. Previously, the final four was the only chance for that opportunity."

One of those who received his first taste of lacrosse was Jeff Moeller. The

communications director for the NHL's Los Angeles Kings, Moeller was assigned the public and media relations task for the First 4. The owner of the Kings, AEG, also owns the Home Depot Center. Growing up in Southern California, lacrosse was a foreign entity.

"I had never seen a live lacrosse game," said Moeller, who shifted to the First 4 after the NHL work stoppage. "It combines a great combination of speed and power. Having grown up playing baseball, basketball, soccer, water polo and swimming, in addition to one year of college rugby, I would have loved to have been introduced to the sport as a youth."

While impressed by the sport, Moeller knew he had a daunting task in trying to get the provincial, unknowledgeable Los Angeles media to hype the event. He toyed with the idea of using a couple of area natives and notable lax alums, Jim Brown and Wayne Gretzky, to highlight the sport, but both were out of town.

"I thought that it was going to be a tough sell to the local media, as they, like me, probably do not have a lot of experience with the sport," said Moeller. "There is an indoor team in Anaheim, but they do not seem to generate a lot of publicity, so I thought initially that this event could struggle in the news media."

"In terms of attendance, I knew that the sport did have a following, especially in Orange County, San Diego and the Bay Area, so it was just a

