



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Looking up to Toronto Raptor General manager Glen Grunwald (left) are from left: Ian Raynor, Scarborough Chamber of Commerce vice-president, Ashok Baghel, Hilton Suites general manager, Eric Tappenden, Markham Board of Trade Board of Directors chairperson and Board of Trade President Ruth Burkholder. Mr Grunwald spoke Thursday at the Hilton Suites hotel in Markham.

Raptors should contend, Markham audience told

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Toronto Raptors fans can not only look forward to a successful season — beer drinkers will appreciate the 40 per cent increase in urinals at the Air Canada Centre, Raptors general manager Glen Grunwald told a receptive Markham audience Thursday.

Despite the fact star Hakeem Olajuwon's status is uncertain due to injury, the team should be a versatile, exciting NBA playoff contender, Mr. Grunwald said to about 100 members of the Markham Board of Trade and the Scarborough Chamber of Commerce at the Hilton Suites Hotel.

He noted Vince Carter is strong and healthy, Antonio Davis and Jerome Williams will see more playing time this year and new players like Lindsay Hunter and Mamadou N'diaye should make major contributions.

"We're going to show some of the criticism we received last year was unjustified," he said, adding especially those comments made by a certain Toronto reporter who "obviously has a Vince Carter bobblehead stuck up his butt".

Mr. Grunwald also hinted there may be more trades or new acquisitions prior to the season's start next month.

"We're still talking about trades," he said. "Things are in the works I think will improve the team, but there's nothing I can discuss right now."

The organization's new slogan is "From good to great" and that includes upgrades to the ACC, he said.

Additions to the quick service menus are planned, the Original Six bar on the third floor has been revamped into a nightclub called Adrenalin and "the beer drinkers will be glad to hear we're adding 40 per cent more urinals in the men's washrooms," Mr. Grunwald said to a laugh, followed by a whispered comment from a nearby table: "What about the women?"

As an organization, Mr. Grunwald noted, "We're not 100 per cent but we're trying to get there."

He also made time for questions from the floor, which touched on issues like declining TV revenues, community-based basketball to encourage future NBA stars and the problem of good young players like former Raptor Tracy McGrady leaving for U.S. markets.

That's not happening as much, Mr. Grunwald said.

"People have really started to be interested in playing in Toronto," explained the former Markham resident, who now calls Aurora home.

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