East-West Shrine Game: Same Great Cause, Exciting New Location

(NAPS)—It was the same great game, to benefit the same great cause; only the location changed.

Once again, the East-West Shrine Game, the "granddaddy" of all post-season college all-star games, was played to benefit Shriners Hospitals for Children, a network of 22 hospitals that provide expert medical care to children with orthopaedic problems, including spinal cord injuries, and youngsters with burn injuries.

This year, the game was played at Pacific Bell Park, home of Major League Baseball's San Francisco Giants. The move marked the Shrine Game's return to its city of origin after an absence of 27 years.

The 76th annual East-West Shrine Game, held January 13, was the first football game ever played at Pacific Bell Park, located in San Francisco's China Basin. The stadium will serve as the game's home at least for the next four years (through 2005). The 40,800-seat park combines the traditional style and old-time feel of older ballparks with all the modern amenities of new facilities. The park features breathtaking views of San Francisco Bay and the downtown skyline.

According to Jeffrey Foster, executive vice president of the Shrine Game, "It was exciting to witness the local and national attention that the game created because it was being played in Pacific Bell Park for the first time. It helped us to better achieve our goal of creating public awareness of Shriners Hospitals, and the stadium's intimate setting created an exciting atmosphere for fans and players. Furthermore, the game experienced an increase in corporate support because of its return to San Francisco."

Pacific Bell Park, home of the San Francisco Giants, is the new site of the East-West Shrine Game.

During the week before the game, many activities took place, including a players' tour of the city as well as the always-exciting Sacramento Shriners Hospital visit, a golf tournament, an NFL workout day for the participants, a Shrine Game luncheon for players and the public, a Hall of Fame party and a players' awards banquet.

The game was televised live on ESPN in the U.S. and Canada, with an estimated viewership of five million. The game was also broadcast live on the radio—for the first time in many years.

"With the help of Nobles throughout Shrinedom, more than $14 million has been raised by the Shrine Game over the years to help support the 'World's Greatest Philanthropy' and ensure that deserving youngsters continue to receive expert medical care at no cost," Foster said.

He emphasized that the game's motto, "Strong Legs Run so that Weak Legs May Walk," is as true today as it was when the first game was played more than 75 years ago.

For more information about the game and all activities surrounding it, visit the game's Web site at www.shrinegame.com.

For more information on Shriners' network of 22 hospitals that provide free treatment to children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, write to: Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607, or visit the Web site at www.shrinershq.org.

If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada. Shriners Hospitals provide free treatment to children under age 18 without regard to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.