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The Sports Museum of America opens on May 7. This is an artist's rendering of the planned Immersion Theater.

Museum for all sports

SmA makes founder's dream real

By Kyle Stack
Special to amNewYork

Phillip Schwab's dream began during his first visit to the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., on Sept. 10, 2001.

Schwab's thinking that day went like this: What if there were a smaller, more accessible version of the basketball hall in New York City? And what if this museum of artifacts and interactive exhibits encompassed other sports?

The destruction in lower Manhattan the following day only emboldened the longtime sports and entertainment executive's dream of starting a sports museum.

On May 7, the Sports Museum of America (SmA) will open at 26 Broadway, becoming "the nation's first and only all sports experience," as its Web site touts.

"I thought we could build something in New York City that would be both its own museum of all sports and an endorsement to get people to visit the actual Basketball Hall of Fame," said



The Sports Museum of America's artifacts include a photograph from Jesse Owens' 1936 ticker-tape parade in Manhattan, above, and a boxing glove from Ali-Frazier II at Madison Square Garden in 1974, right.

SmA at a glance

- Opens May 7 at 26 Broadway
- Ticket prices: \$27 for adults, \$24 for seniors (60+) and students, \$20 for children 4-14, free for children younger than 4

Schwab, SmA's 45-year-old founder and chief executive officer. (The "m" in SmA's acronym is lower-case, officials said, to call attention to the museum's claim that it offers more than a traditional, gallery-based museum.)

SmA is located, appropriately, on the Canyon of Heroes ticker-tape parade route. Its collection of more than 800 artifacts, 1,100

photos, 24 interactive exhibits and 20 original films will cover more than two dozen sports. The SmA is also the new, official home of the Heisman Trophy and the Billie Jean King International Women's Sports Center.

That opportunity is there because of SmA's initial partnership with the Basketball Hall of Fame. Schwab's willingness to work with one hall of fame led to partnerships with dozens more single-sport halls of fame.

"I thought it would end up being five or six," Schwab said of these partnerships, "but it's turned out to be 62. ... I just think it [SmA] would be really inferior [without the partnerships]. You can build it, but it wouldn't truly be the national museum for sports."

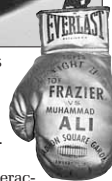
"Done in the right way, sports should be as good a subject matter for a museum as art or science," he added.

The partnerships brought in artifacts such as Jesse Owens' diary from the 1936 Olympics and letters written by basketball inventor James Naismith.

SmA also plans interactive features. "You'll be able to feel a lot of things that you would never feel in sports otherwise," Schwab said. "You can put your face inside of a goalie's mask and then you're going to be seeing hockey pucks coming at you 100 miles per hour."

Schwab wanted SmA to be a part of lower Manhattan's revitalization, so he applied for Liberty Bonds. The tax-exempt bonds, of which SmA was awarded \$52 million, are meant to encourage corporations to build their headquarters in lower Manhattan.

SmA was awarded the bonds after Ernst & Young conducted a study asserting that the museum had the potential, in its first year, to attract one million visitors and have a \$100 million impact — including construction costs and tourism — on the area's economy.



Schwab

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| 1 | 2-Bedroom | 2-4 | \$950 | \$40,360 - \$48,432 |
| 1 | 2-Bedroom | 2 | \$998 | \$42,280 - \$49,152 |
| 1 | 3-Bedroom | 3-4 | \$998 | \$42,280 - \$50,736 |
| 1 | 3-Bedroom | 4-6 | \$1,101 | \$46,760 - \$56,112 |

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