



cover story

The Dodgeball Arena R&D team – In the back row from left to right: Brad Fremont, Marcio Vieira, Mike Andrews, Bob Patterson, Drew Krouse (Chief Operating Officer/R&D Manager), Dan Rudz and Reagan Craddock. In the front, also from left: Rob Meckes, Andy Weselak, Nick Brancato, Ian Peacock and Darrek Thomas.

Business Continues to Heat Up at ICE

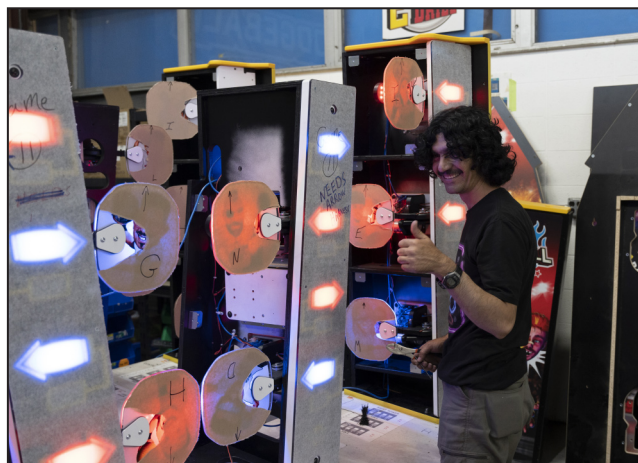
Game Company Humming with Additions to Workforce & Product Line

Coming off the global pandemic, ICE has more than 100 new employees throughout the production facility and reports record backorders across over 17 different product lines. They ask: “Who would have thought 2022 would bring so much growth and incredibly opportunity to our industry?”

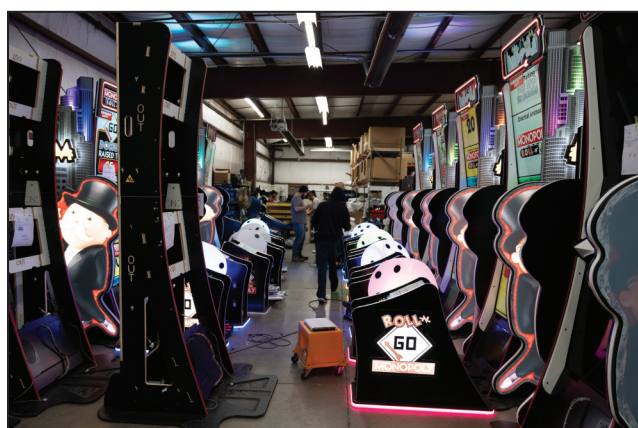
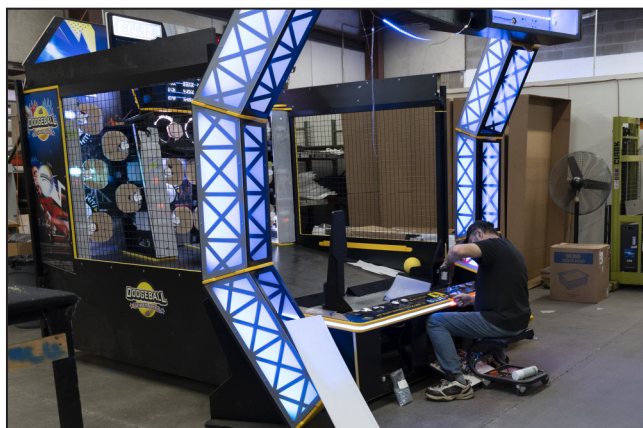
“Things have been humming!” said ICE President Joe Coppola. “Going back to last year, our employment recruiting efforts have never been so aggressive and, finally, we are seeing it pay off. We have added well over 100 people to the workforce across all departments including our woodshop, harnessing, critical assembly, produc-

tion assembly, purchasing, inventory control, materials handling, accounting and shipping.

“No doubt many challenges still exist today and in some ways it’s almost as challenging as it was during times of Covid-19, but in a very different way obviously,” he continued. “While the labor market has certainly



Dodgeball Arena is just one of the new game in production at the Clarence, N.Y., factory as is another show-stopper, *Monopoly* (below).



improved, and we've been able to add some really great people to our team, we are now challenged with properly training everyone."

Coppola added that new supply chain, shipping and logistics challenges have arisen as well. "We feel very fortunate to have the largest backorder of games we've ever had and we are trying very hard every day not to disappoint our customers — especially those who've been with us for the last 40 years — with the longer lead times."

Those lengthy delivery windows have caused some stressful days and nights, he added, but despite the challenges, the company's top priority remains "quality over quantity" as ICE remains committed to being a premier game manufacturer.

"We are doing everything we can to communicate with

many great customers globally, but we've no doubt disappointed customers at times and that doesn't feel good," Coppola said. "That being said, we know that eventually we will get our production efficiency back to where it was pre-Covid-19, get our lead times down to where they were for 37 years prior to the pandemic, and at the same

time keep bringing great new product to our loyal customer base."

Innovative Concepts

Coppola emphasizes the company's commitment not only to production, but to an area the company has always considered vital to its future: aggressive development of "innovative concepts!"

Coming out of 2021, ICE knew it was time to recommit to game R&D and has brought *Dodgeball Arena* to market.

"As many have seen, this is not just a game, but it's a true attraction and its earned like an attraction," Coppola boasted.

"It's a game that once again promotes friends and families to compete in a fun, skill-based environment," he said. "Our R&D team created this arena atmosphere that sometimes will attract two, three or four players at a time.



ICE President Joe Coppola with Francois Mevs at the 2021 IAAPA Expo in Orlando



ICE's Shipwreck

It's awesome to watch people play and almost every play has people smiling, laughing and genuinely enjoying the experience."

The company said the grand size and number of targets for players to throw at has really set apart *Dodgeball* from other ball toss games. Giving players the opportunity to hit 14 different pop-out targets, five bonus targets and two stationary targets allows for many different strategies to get your high score featured on the arena jumbotron. The ICE team believes this is the most action-packed 30-second game on the market and it continues to bring back the adrenaline rush and nostalgia of playing dodgeball in grade school. *Dodgeball* provides two different gameplay offerings – training mode for single player and competitive mode for multiplayer.

Coppola credits the design to ICE COO Drew Krouse and his incredible team of engineers. "Their commitment to creativity, but also designing games with operator challenges in mind, makes a big difference when our sales team is out there promoting our product," he said. "Plus, everything we design, is built to be on location for 10-15 years or more. Again, we believe one of the things that separates us from our competition out there are the 20-plus-year-old games still being operated today for which we continue to pro-

vide parts and service. Operators know when they buy an ICE product, it's going to be well-built and withstand years of rugged play on location."

In addition to *Dodgeball Arena*, ICE will be showing two other new products at IAAPA Expo that will be in production by January 2023. The first game, *Shipwreck*, is a 3-player redemption and ICE's latest in their carnival skill wall series. Based on the popular carnival game *I Got It*, players throw the small pink balls onto the playfield in an attempt to get "four in a row" to sink the ship displayed on the 75" HD-LED screen with the least amount of balls needed.

Every play gives the players nine balls to attempt to get the four in a row. Players win more tickets by getting the four in a row with the least amount of balls. If you get the four on your first four attempts, you win the big-ticket bonus.

ICE teamed up with video partners from PlayMechanix – George Petro, Will Carlin and their team. Said Coppola, "They always deliver spectacular video and audio content that coincides with the interactive game play to perfection."

"It's been a great addition to the carnival series lineup," Krouse said. "Similar to *Milk Jug Toss*, *Down the Clown* and *Bean Bag Toss*, *Shipwreck* appeals to all ages and really encourages families to play together and that's why we decided to make it as a 3-player unit."

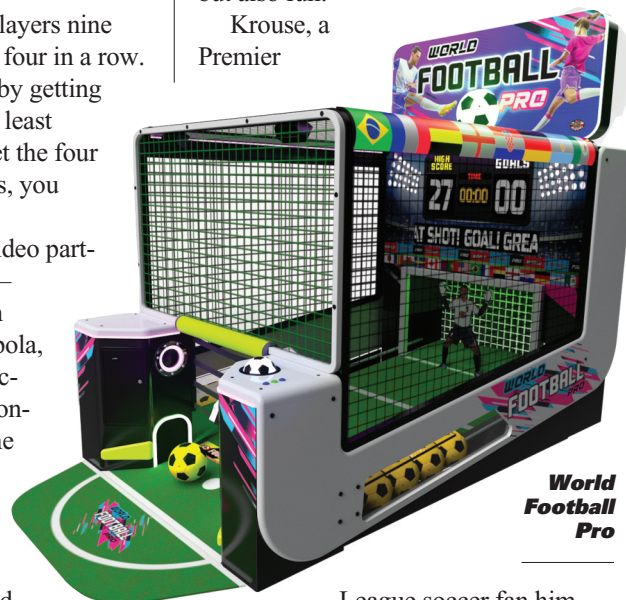
He also said that the "skill nature" of *Shipwreck* "really promotes repeat play and you can see as players play more, they do better, and they improve."

Also new to the lineup at IAAPA and making its debut is *World Football Pro*, a soccer-themed sports simulator where the players kick as many shots as

possible in an operator-adjustable time-frame, usually 30-40 seconds. There is a moving goalie that attempts to save each shot and prevent goals just like the real-life penalty kick. The more goals scored, the more tickets awarded, and there is also a high score leaderboard.

Krouse was quick to complement ICE's development partners on this game – Gordon Crompton and Ben Wilson of the U.K.-based GB Amusements. "Gordon and Ben delivered a very well-done prototype unit that they tested extensively on location near their facility in England," Krouse noted. "As avid soccer fans themselves, they were committed to creating a more realistic experience than the industry has seen before and gameplay that kids and adults alike would find challenging but also fun."

Krouse, a Premier



World Football Pro

League soccer fan himself, added: "We tested this game on location both in Europe and the United States, and across both continents it performed very well. It's similar in size and offering the same type game experience as one of our *NBA Hoops*, but instead of shooting basketballs, the players kick soccer balls and try to score goals past the moving goalie.

"As we all know, soccer – or football as it's called in most of the world – is the most popular sport on a global level and we hope to capitalize on its popularity with this game. The size and more

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realistic play have people coming back for more. We saw very strong earnings on test initially in Europe, which we expected, but when we tested the game here in the U.S., it was equally very good and similar in earnings to our basketball games. Like our basketball

games, we envision *World Cup Pro* will become a staple product in FECs, sports bars and many concepts.”

On the company front, ICE has also added Ryan Coppola to the very experienced sales team of Greg Kania, Gene Brogowski and Dan Coppola.

Ryan’s father Joe said, “Timing was good to bring Ryan back to Buffalo from Chicago, where he attended college and worked for a few years after graduating. Ryan will assist both our domestic and international sales team working with our U.S. distributors and national accounts as well as our many great export customers.” The younger Coppola grew up working in the factory, building ICE games and assisting the production team.

“Ryan was very fortunate in that he grew up close to my father Ralph and at the young age of 24 has learned many life lessons from my dad,” Joe continued. “We know Ralph would be very happy and proud that he’s joined ICE now and is assisting the sales and marketing efforts in any way he can.”

Another major focus for ICE in



Craig Erhard

ICE Chief Financial Officer

2022 has been in their Parts & Service Department, where they’ve added seven new very energetic and committed employees that are shipping what Coppola described as “more parts than we have ever shipped in year.”

“The department, headed by Lenny Hayes and

Shawna Bancroft, is now running on all cylinders and while we have been aggressively training some great new personnel over the past 9-10 months, it certainly takes time to learn the over 25,000 different parts we ship for our product range,” he said.

“Most days now we ship over 250 packages and oftentimes our team will be working into the night and many Saturdays as well. It’s an incredibly talented, hard-working group that’s very focused on getting our parts lead times down as much as possible and now more than ever proactively communicating with customers on back ordered or tougher to get parts.”

The final key to getting through these last couple of years, and contributing to the stability of the company during challenging times, has been 20-year ICE veteran and Chief Financial Officer Craig Erhard – along with his loyal and devoted team, including Vince Bonura, Nancy Abel, Kassi Lista.

“I can’t say enough about Craig’s efforts over the past many years, but



Ryan Coppola (center) discusses the company’s *Monopoly* game with Anup Tapadia of TouchMagix (right) at a show.

it’s probably never been as significant it was in 2020, and into 2021 and 2022. His financial acumen and discipline helped us build a balance sheet that could withstand the global pandemic,” Coppola said.

“Craig was an incredible stabilizing factor as he worked day in and day out, and mostly from our offices, making sure we had the cash flow necessary to withstand the most challenging 18 months certainly in my career at ICE. He worked tirelessly with our internal management and production teams as well working with our banks and financial advisors to help put us in the healthy position we are in today as a company. Our ownership and management team could not be more thankful or appreciative. He’s definitely one of the reasons we are fortunate to be celebrating 40 years in this business,” Coppola concluded.



ICE, like many companies in coin-op, wrestles with supply chain, shipping and logistics challenges but reports strong orders and success in hiring. Their parts business is also brisk. That’s the company’s warehouse pictured above and at right.

