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## **POKER STADIUM LV'S NEW DRAW**

### **Some dream of full house at Neonopolis**

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FOX Sports Net is turning the televised poker tournament experience into a live spectator sport in downtown Las Vegas.

Three of the movie theaters at Neonopolis are being converted into the Pokerdome, where about 200 people will be able to watch weekly tournaments. Players' cards will be revealed live on televisions in the arena, and the players will sit behind a soundproof, one-way glass, so they can't see or hear fans' reactions, said George Greenberg, executive vice president of programming and production for FOX Sports Net.

"We're creating the first-ever poker arena, with all the bells and whistles," Greenberg said. "This is going to be NASCAR for poker."

Poker's popularity surge can be traced to the television broadcasts of tournaments in which tiny cameras reveal each player's hand to viewers at home. The viewers see when players are bluffing and how professionals play different cards.

Until now, those who go to casinos and watch tournaments live have had to wait for the showdown when players reveal their cards or have had to take a poker player's often-suspect word on the quality of his or her hand.

That will change on May 20 with the first Texas hold 'em tournament at the Pokerdome.

Greenberg said that plans are for free admission and no alcohol. The tournament is to be broadcast the following day on FOX Sports Net, network officials said.

They said the amount of money winners will get has not been determined, but other aspects have been finalized.

There are to be 44 tournaments a year, and the network has a three-year lease at Neonopolis. Each weekly event, on Saturday nights, will consist of one table of players who have qualified online at

[Mansionpoker.net](http://Mansionpoker.net), which is co-sponsoring the television series. Players will be wearing monitors, so the audience can track their heart rates, and cameras will "rabbit hunt," revealing cards that would have come if a player hadn't folded, Greenberg said.

Mayor Oscar Goodman and downtown business interests are hoping the Pokerdome will help draw more people to the Fremont Street Experience area.

Neonopolis, a city-supported mall and parking garage project at 450 Fremont Street, has struggled to find and keep tenants since it opened in 2002.

Goodman said Neonopolis couldn't be called a success until all of its space was leased. But he pointed to projects like the Pokerdome and to Hennessey's Tavern and Mickey Finnz, two restaurants across Fremont Street that will have their grand openings tonight, as reasons for his optimism for downtown Las Vegas.

"It's critical we get that kind of excitement and buzz down there," he said.

A call to a representative of C.B. Richard Ellis, which manages Neonopolis, was not returned.

When Neonopolis opened, casinos on Fremont Street insisted that gambling not be allowed at the site.

But a representative of Boyd Gaming Corp., which owns three downtown casinos, said that the Pokerdome doesn't appear to be competition.

"On the surface, an occasional made-for-TV poker event could possibly bring a lot of positive exposure to downtown Las Vegas," said Rob Stillwell, a Boyd Gaming spokesman.

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