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Athletic club owner hopes 3rd strike won't put him out of game

By David Webb - The Rare Reporter

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Turtle Creek Athletic Club's Liebermann promises gym will reopen soon, new investors will prevent any more interruptions of service

It wasn't a feeling of déjà vu — it really had happened before.

In fact, it had happened twice before to some of the members of the Turtle Creek Athletic Club who went to work out on May 18 and found a lockout notice on the front door of the gym.

The notice informed readers that the Centrum building's management company, Transwestern, had changed the locks because the operators "failed to pay rent owed and past due in the amount of not less than \$138,423.47 through May 2007."

In 2003, the Centrum Sports Club, which operated in the same facility occupied by the Turtle Creek Athletic Club, was locked out, and the facility remained closed for two years before Fitness Evolution re-opened it in August 2005. Then many of the members who lost prepaid memberships at the Centrum Sports Club joined Gold's Gym downtown, just to have the experience repeated at that location.



Michael Liebermann

"Having a situation like this is hard enough, but it's compounded because of what has happened in the past," said Michael Liebermann, owner of the Turtle Creek Athletic Club, during an interview this week. "It's definitely created a very fragile situation."

Liebermann said the difference this time will be that he plans to have the athletic club re-opened quickly, whereas the previous two closings were permanent ones. The reopening could occur any day, he said.

"I truly want to apologize for the inconvenience this has caused," Liebermann said. "The last thing I ever wanted to happen is for anyone to have an interruption in their workouts."

Liebermann said that he has spent the last year since he purchased the club from Fitness Evolution raising the capital he needs to make the club a financial success. The money has been raised, but it came too late to prevent the temporary closing, he said.

"Unfortunately, we ran into a time line issue," Liebermann said. "The day my funds were set to arrive did not match some other time lines."

Liebermann said he wants to assure his current members that they will not experience another closing at his gym.

"Once we get the club back open, I'm very confident in saying there will be no interruption again," said Liebermann, who noted that he has invested all of his assets in the gym.

Liebermann said the day he was locked out of the facility, he was unaware that it was about to occur.

"We knew there were deadlines looming, and I knew the clock was running," Liebermann said. "But I had no idea

going in that Friday that was going to be the situation. I just feel terrible about it.”

Liebermann said he hopes his 1,000 members will stick with him and not join other clubs.

“We understand that with every day that passes it makes the situation worse,” Liebermann said. “I hope they will be patient and hold on. If people can wait and not join another club it would really make a difference.”

Liebermann said that he is working diligently to get the club reopened, but it is a complicated process once there is a lockout by a building's management.

“It really is a very complicated situation,” Liebermann said. “There's a lot of entities involved. But it's a problem that can be solved. It's getting solved.”

Liebermann said the building management and Fitness Evolution, the leasee from whom he bought the gym, is cooperating with him.

“It's a very positive working relationship,” Liebermann said.

Liebermann said the gym means much more than an income source to him.

“I've just been blown away by the friends I've made, the relationships I've had and the support I've received,” Liebermann said. “It's like nothing I've ever seen before. I wouldn't change the situation and my members for anything.”

Liebermann said he plans for a charity benefit scheduled for June 1 at the athletic club to go on as planned, and that it will now double as reopening celebration.

For the latest update on the club, call 214-418-9925.

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