

sightings



Let the Games Begin

Anything you can do, we can do better. Bigger too. In fact, we can do things you *can't* do. These days, that seems to be Dubai's message to the rest of the world as it rises and expands to reign as the planet's premier playground. In this land of superlatives, where five-star hotels give way to seven and skyscrapers soar to record heights, even Mother Nature is incapable of taming the wild Middle East. In spite of heinous working conditions—all but unavoidable given the searing sun—the tiny emirate is in the process of developing various ambitious real-estate projects, few more so than Dubai Sports City, promoted by the 3-D billboard shown above.

"Dubai Sports City is a destination of enduring spirit and passion," boasts DSC's website, "a place whose heart and soul is expressed in rich iconography, timeless rituals and modern heroes. A place where sport is life, champions live, and legends are made." What sounds like a mythological province for

the gods actually will be over 50 million square feet of sporting venues, academies, residential and commercial facilities, and cultural centers.

Most Middle Eastern economies are wholly dependent on their abundance of oil, but in Dubai—where oil reserves are expected to run dry within twenty years and where petroleum and natural gas account for less than 6 percent of a \$37 billion economy—both the government and the private sector have invested heavily in real estate and construction, partly in hopes of molding Dubai into the world's top tourist destination. In accordance with such aspirations, Sports City, scheduled for completion in 2012 at a cost of \$4 billion, will eventually feature four stadiums with a combined capacity of 100,000 spectators, a golf course, 3.8 million square feet in which to shop, numerous hotels, and homes for up to 800,000 residents. If real-estate development were a sport, Dubai would take the gold. —VADIM LIBERMAN