

Nuggets, one of the NBA's struggling franchises, the irony is not lost on Leiweke.

"A lot of people blamed my brother and I for running the Kings out of Kansas City," Leiweke said. "So it is somewhat ironic that we go from a situation where people are blaming us for running a franchise out of town to now I find myself in a situation where my task at hand is to restabilize a franchise that some people thought would leave town."

"When the ownership of the Kings came to me and asked what I thought we should do, I told them to get Tim to run the sales and marketing and oversee the business side and I would run the basketball side. They didn't and the Kings had to move," Fitzsimmons said. "I truly believe if we could have had Leiweke running the business side and me running the basketball side, the Kings would still be in Kansas City."

"A lot of the time you can't say something like 'Tim Leiweke saved the Comets,' but with him you can. Just look at the evidence. The Kings had to leave Kansas City when Tim was running the Comets and when he went to Minnesota, the Comets had to leave Kansas City, too."

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him in the NBA. Leiweke and Fitzsimmons forged a relationship while in Kansas City; Leiweke was with the Comets and Fitzsimmons was head coach of the Kings. The two remain close friends today.

Growing up in St. Louis, Missouri, sports played a large role in the Leiweke family. Besides always playing whichever sport was in season, be it football, basket-

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ball or baseball, Leiweke spent a summer as a batboy for the St. Louis Cardinals. But with his reaction to sports towards the end of high school, he did not foresee himself holding a high profile in the sports world in the future.

"My brothers went on to do well in sports in high school and college," Leiweke said. "I was a

fairly good athlete in high school, but it's funny, I got caught up when kids were kind of revolting against sports. And I revolted.

"Everybody expected me to come along and because my brothers were so good and they were All-State, to be another good athlete and play in all the sports. I didn't like that, so I revolted."

He may have revolted against playing sports, but the drive to succeed never left him. After his second successful stint with the Comets, Leiweke moved to Minnesota, where his profile in the sports world reached another plateau. In his first season in Minnesota, the Timberwolves drew 1,072,572 fans, setting the all-time single season record among basketball, football and hockey teams. The Wolves joined the Detroit Pistons as the only non-baseball team to draw over 1,000,000 fans in a single season.

Also with Minnesota, Leiweke played a major role in the construction of the Target Center, the Timberwolves' new home and one of the premier arenas in the NBA.

"I loved the staff in Minnesota, they were a great group," he said. "Drawing over a million fans that first year was great. Learning how to build and open an arena was a great experience. From a learning standpoint, Minnesota was the

perfect place for me to be during that point in my life. Everything worked out well with Denver because I felt I had done everything I could do in Minnesota."

Now in Denver, Leiweke is tackling his latest challenge with customary zeal. A lifelong midwesterner, he said Denver is the nicest place he has lived in, which works out well since he plans on being here for the long term.

"I heard somebody once call him 'The Beethoven of Sports Promotion.' He has the great ability to get people emotionally involved and feel like they 'own' a team," Tod Leiweke said. "That is what he will bring to the people of Denver. From season ticket holders to corporate sponsors, he will be selling partnerships and make people feel like they are a part of the team's success."

Right now though, it is time for another meeting. Before heading out, he tries to find some time for yet another client, but it will be tough. His day-by-day calendar resembles a graffiti-covered warehouse wall. Suddenly, a sly smile crosses his face.

"This is wild, isn't it?" he asks. "I love it."

It is the eye of the hurricane. For Tim Leiweke, it is home. ●