

= Effect of Hurricane Katrina on the New Orleans Hornets =

After Hurricane Katrina devastated the U.S. city of New Orleans , Louisiana on August 29 , 2005 , and caused extensive damage to the New Orleans Arena , the New Orleans Hornets ( now known as the New Orleans Pelicans ) of the National Basketball Association ( NBA ) were unable to play any home games there for the entire 2005 ? 06 season . They temporarily relocated to Oklahoma City , Oklahoma , becoming the New Orleans / Oklahoma City Hornets . After playing the majority of home games for both the 2005 ? 06 and 2006 ? 07 seasons at the Ford Center in Oklahoma City , the Hornets returned to New Orleans for the 2007 ? 08 season .

Following the success of the Hornets ' tenure in the city , the Seattle SuperSonics relocated to Oklahoma City for the 2008 ? 09 season , and now compete as the Oklahoma City Thunder .

= = Response = =

Because of the extensive damage resulting from the hurricane , where the Hornets would play for the 2005 ? 06 season came into question . Although the New Orleans Arena suffered only slight damage , the flooding surrounding the area made it impossible to use . With the training camp scheduled to begin on October 4 , the team announced that the first three weeks of camp would be held at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs , Colorado , instead of their usual location , Alario Center in Westwego . Additionally the team stated that they wanted to play home games within Louisiana , at either the Pete Maravich Assembly Center or the Rivercenter in Baton Rouge . On September 3 , Hornets owner George Shinn stated that the storm would not be used as a reason to permanently relocate the franchise .

By September 10 , the prospect of securing a Baton Rouge location to host the Hornets was fading as a result of the facilities being utilized for hurricane related relief operations . Numerous cities inquired about hosting the franchise for the season , including Kansas City , Louisville , Nashville , Oklahoma City and San Diego . During this period , Oklahoma City announced that it was the favored choice to serve as the temporary home of the franchise , although by mid @-@ September SMG announced that the New Orleans arena could potentially be ready for occupancy by the All @-@ Star Break . However , by late September the Hornets finalized a move to Oklahoma City , where 35 games would be played at the Ford Center , as well as six in Baton Rouge at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center . Additionally , it was announced that three of the games in March could be moved to New Orleans if the arena repairs were complete . At the same time , the NBA also announced the team would be referred to officially as the New Orleans / Oklahoma City Hornets , and that the deal reached with Oklahoma City would allow for the team to return for the 2006 ? 07 season , if necessary .

= = Delayed return = =

In order to allow for a full recovery of the New Orleans market in the wake of the storm , the NBA announced on January 31 , 2006 , that the Hornets would remain in Oklahoma City for the 2006 ? 07 season and return for the 2007 ? 08 season . The league also announced that New Orleans would play host for the 2008 All @-@ Star Game , in addition to hosting the team for six of their 41 home games during the season . Although guarantees by the league and organization indicated a return for 2007 ? 08 , many fans in New Orleans were still skeptical of a permanent return due to the popularity of the team in Oklahoma City . Meanwhile , the Hornets opened their season in Oklahoma City with a 26 @-@ point win over the Sacramento Kings on November 1 , 2005 . They played their first game in Louisiana in a loss to the Phoenix Suns on December 21 , 2005 , and they played the first professional sports event in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina on March 8 , 2006 , where they lost to the Los Angeles Lakers . The Hornets completed the 2005 ? 06 season by winning 38 games , tenth in the Western Conference . They became the first team since the 1974 ? 75 Boston Celtics to play home games at four separate venues : the Ford Center in Oklahoma City , the New Orleans Arena in New Orleans , the Pete Maravich Assembly Center in Baton Rouge , and the Lloyd

Noble Center in Norman , Oklahoma . The Hornets had finished last in attendance in the previous season in New Orleans , but playing in Ford Center , they averaged 18 @, @ 168 fans , a 78 % increase . Referring to the fan support in Oklahoma City , Hornets star Chris Paul said that " You get a feeling you 're a part of something special " ; mayor Mick Cornett said , " My expectations were lofty , but we 've exceeded them . "

All repair work on the New Orleans Arena was finished by March 2006 , and a new scoreboard and video displays were added during the process . In June 2006 , Shinn stated he was pleased with the ongoing recovery process in New Orleans and again reaffirmed his desire to permanently return for the 2007 ? 08 season . However , the Hornets also announced that they were in the process of negotiating with Oklahoma City to play the 2007 ? 08 season at the Ford Center as a contingency plan . The Hornets opened the 2006 ? 07 season at New Orleans with a win over the Boston Celtics . They improved their final record from the previous season by one game , and again finished tenth in the Western Conference , three games out of the playoffs . Their attendance declined slightly compared to the previous season , and they finished 15th overall in attendance . The Hornets made their permanent return to New Orleans on October 31 , 2007 , when they defeated the Sacramento Kings 109 @-@ 90 to open the 2007 ? 08 season . In the following two seasons , the Hornets averaged an attendance of 15 @, @ 574 . During the 2008 All @-@ Star Game , the NBA donated \$ 5 million towards relief work , and staged an NBA Cares program throughout the city to help rebuilding efforts .