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NBA arena rankings: No. 6 Oklahoma City Thunder's Chesapeake Energy Arena

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The Oklahoma City Thunder's home is our choice for the sixth-best NBA arena (Josh Robbins, Orlando Sentinel) (January 13, 2011)

By **Josh Robbins**
Orlando Sentinel
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It's difficult to build an **NBA** arena that stands out from the pack.

In sharp contrast to the sport of baseball — which enables architects to create quirky outfield dimensions and venues that sometimes employ retractable roofs — basketball arenas are inherently similar. Basketball courts always employ the same dimensions, and the arenas themselves always are closed to the elements. Designers also have to

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squeeze in a lot of functionality into a small land area.

But these arenas are special.

We're unveiling our picks for the NBA's top 10 venues.

To arrive at these rankings, we took into account an arena's location, the atmosphere created by the home team's fans, the aesthetics of the exterior, the aesthetics of the interior, its fan-friendliness and its place in the game's history.

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This is a wildly subjective list. Hopefully, this will spark some serious debate. Disagree with a ranking? Then chime in with your opinion by writing in the comments field below.

Chesapeake Energy Arena

Arena ranking: 6th

Home of: Oklahoma City Thunder

Location: Oklahoma City

Capacity for pro basketball: 18,203

First Thunder regular-season game in arena: Oct. 29, 2008

Positives: Simply put, the Thunder have perhaps the best fans in the league, and their enthusiasm makes this

building one of the NBA's top venues. Fans are attentive, and they're loud, giving the arena almost a college-basketball feel (sans the live band, of course). . . . It helps that Rumble the Bison is the league's top mascot. Rumble is more of a cheerleader than a goofball; he precedes games by banging on a drum at center court, and the sound approximates the sound of thunder sweeping across the Plains. . . . The top of the scoreboard is blah, but the bottom of it features an additional screen that is specially angled for fans who sit courtside. . . . The people who work inside the arena are friendly and courteous. . . . Finally, Chesapeake Energy Arena's downtown location is a short walk to Bricktown, an enclave of nice restaurants and bars.

Negatives: This arena would be much higher on the list if its exterior wasn't one of the most dull exteriors in the league. It's as unimaginative as it gets, although the team deserves praise for creating signage that celebrates the Thunder's players.

Overall: The building is undergoing a significant renovation valued over \$100 million, and the exterior should be significantly improved once the work is complete. The changes could vault the arena into the top three in our league rankings.

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