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MISSISSIPPI GAMING NEWS

Official Newsmagazine of the Mississippi Gaming Industry

JULY 2013

www.ms gamingnews.com

THE GOLD STANDARD Golden Nugget opens on the Gulf Coast



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Golden Nugget opens on Gulf Coast

By Lori Beth Susman

BILOXI — **Charlene Knowles** has been coming to Biloxi at least twice a year for more than 15 years. The Long Beach Gardens, Fla., woman clapped with delight, as Golden Nugget executives cut a golden ribbon to mark the opening of the first phase of the \$100 million property renovation.

Until June 21, the Golden Nugget was the Isle Casino Hotel, the first casino in Mississippi. “The Isle really needed a change,” Knowles said. “This is great, just great.” Biloxi Mayor **A.J. Holloway** spoke at the opening, addressing **Tilman J. Fertitta**, owner of Landry’s, Golden Nugget’s parent company. “We are thankful for your bringing the Golden Nugget name to our city, and we appreciate your confidence in Biloxi,” Holloway said. “This is an exciting time for us. The oldest casino is now the youngest and the freshest.”

Fertitta told the crowd what they were about to enjoy, including the redesigned casino floor, which has more than 500 slot machines. The Rush Lounge and Party Pit is also open, along with Lillie’s Noodles and Morton’s the Steakhouse.

The casino also launched its new players club, the 24 KARAT Club.

The second phase of the renovation, Fertitta said, will include Michael Patrick’s Sports Bar & Grill, retail outlets, meeting rooms and a ballroom, as well as a new VIP lounge and registration area. Before the end of the year, additional retail shops and a new buffet are scheduled to open.

A land-based casino, to be located between the parking garage and the current casino, will be the final phase of the renovation. Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. and an innovative resort pool will also open at that time.



(Above) Ruth Lynch, floor supervisor, works with Cindy Nguyen as they prepare for the opening of the Golden Nugget.



(Left) Owner Tilman J. Fertitta addresses the crowd at the ribbon cutting, which included the Storyville Stompers Brass Band and feather-clad showgirls.



Marketing Director Melissa Radovich and Vice President of Marketing Brad Rhines stop for a photo at the June 21 opening.



With the casino boasting these amenities and more, Fertitta is confident the resort is going to become a favorite of casino enthusiasts and will bring new guests to the Coast. “They’re just going to love the place,” he said. “There’s really nothing in town this modern.”

Golden Nugget has established brand recognition with locations in Las Vegas, Atlantic City and Laughlin, Nev. That brand, casino executives said, will drive visitors to the area and help grow the market.

Ruth Lynch, a floor supervisor at the casino, is encouraged by those words. More customers coming to the casino means more revenue and more jobs, something that will benefit everyone at the property. “Once people see the casino, they are going to want to come here,” she said.

Fertitta, who continues to have a hand in every aspect of the remodel, said he has always loved the Gulf Coast and is excited to be a part of it now. “The best thing,” about the area, he said, “are the people. The people here are so nice.”