

# SEPARATE BIDDERS TO DISCUSS LIGHTNING

[SOUTH PINELLAS Edition]

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## Document Text

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One group will talk to the current owner. One will talk to potential investors.

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Two competing ownership groups will have separate meetings Wednesday, which could be one of the most significant days in Lightning history.

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Oren Koules, head of OK Hockey, is to meet in Auburn Hills, Mich., with executives from Palace Sports & Entertainment and, perhaps, make an offer.

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Meanwhile, a group including Tampa attorneys Steve Burton and Tom Scarritt and Coral Springs developer Jeff Sherrin will meet with potential investors to gauge interest in putting together an offer of its own.

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Koules clearly has the inside track with a path cleared by Gary Bettman. The commissioner brokered a settlement after Koules was sued by Sherrin and former NHL executive Doug MacLean for basically breach of contract after their failed attempt as Absolute Hockey Enterprises to buy the team, the St. Pete Times Forum lease and 5-1/2 acres near the arena for \$200-million.

Koules, whose group includes business partner Mark Burg and, it is thought, California banker Russell Belinsky, could not be reached. Neither could Palace CEO Tom Wilson. A purchase agreement is not expected to come out of their meeting.

Back in Tampa, Scarritt said he received permission from Lightning lawyers Monday to show potential investors the team's financial information gleaned during Absolute Hockey's due diligence. MacLean said he would be in town Wednesday to see if he wants to be involved.

Scarritt, the attorney for Sherrin and MacLean, said there will be more meetings Thursday to accommodate potential investors.

"Most are local," Scarritt said. "But a few people have called from outside the area - generally, people who have had an interest in buying a franchise before and are kicking the tires to see if they might be interested."

Credit: Times Staff Writer

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## Abstract (Document Summary)

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team, the St. Pete Times Forum lease and 5-1/2 acres near the arena for \$200-million.

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