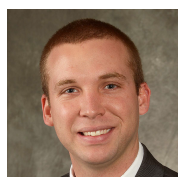


# NACMA CORNER



**Brandon Bernard**

**Stephen F. Austin State University**

*Athletics Marketing Coordinator*

## Selling Out Those Big Games Over Winter Break

How do we draw better crowds at basketball games over the winter holiday break? This is an issue that has plagued us here at Stephen F. Austin for the past few years, and an issue that I know collegiate marketing professionals have experienced and are experiencing around the country.

This year, around July, we learned that our men's basketball team would be hosting SEC opponent Alabama, the first SEC school to travel to Nacogdoches in SFA history, at home on December 30. Our fans, of course, were ecstatic with the announcement, and our head coach Kyle Keller immediately challenged us to sell it out. The problem we immediately recognized was that

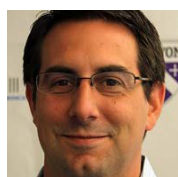
this game was during winter break, at the end of Christmas week, with many families likely to still be out of town visiting family or friends. We had also recently announced a new tiered ticket pricing strategy and this game was the first "Tier 1" game for us, raising the ticket prices from \$20, \$15, and \$10 for Reserved rows A-F, Reserved rows G-Z, and General Admission to \$30, \$25, and \$20.

Our fans in the past had been begging us to do a whiteout so the first thing we looked into was how much a shirt drop would cost. William R. Johnson Coliseum holds 7,203 people, which would have put us considerably over budget, so we settled on 5,000 whiteout shirts. The shirts were easily the most coveted item we have given away this year with fans getting here as early as 12 p.m. for a 5 p.m. tip-off to ensure that they got a shirt. We also decided to use this game as a test run for a fan fest idea that we had seen other schools do for football games. We shut down the road in front of the coliseum for a huge block party and blocked off areas for tailgating as well as areas for sponsors to set up, an area full of yard games and inflatables for kids, a DJ for music, and free food and

beverages for everyone. To get students back, we offered each student two free guest tickets to go along with their free entry by showing their student ID. This idea worked extremely well and ended up getting almost 500 students to the game and including guests, added almost 1,500 fans in total. For advertising, we ran a month-long billboard campaign, printed 100 yard signs to put around town, used a \$1,000 Facebook ad campaign that returned eight times our investment, and also ran a Christmas Day 25 percent off flash sale as a last minute ticket push.

All in all, we spent roughly \$15,000 on this game and brought in a little over \$63,000 which almost doubled our single-game basketball revenue from the entire previous season. We did end up selling out the game with an attendance of 7,203 and Alabama Head Coach Avery Johnson commented in his post-game press conference that, "It was as loud of an arena that we've played in in a long time."

# NADIIIAA CORNER



**Justin Newell**

**Kenyon College**

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## The Front Door

It doesn't matter the size of the school or fan base, your athletics facilities are the front door of your institution. These spaces greet more people on a regular basis than anywhere else on campus. Our venues invite in not only our own students, faculty, coaches and staff, but also visiting teams, alumni, parents, community members and officials. Our staffs set up, host, and tear down for athletics contests, speakers, receptions, camps, wellness classes, community events and countless other gatherings. Our front doors may be brand new, have a fresh coat of paint, or show some signs of aging but we invite people through them all the same.

As administrators, we all understand the role athletics facilities play in recruiting, alumni engagement, and campus culture. While understanding the role our venues play is vital, it is more crucial to understand the role of the individual(s) that tends them. Each department assigns the roles of facility and event

management to someone and it is often one of the many hats that they wear. Ask yourself who is watching your front door? Have you assigned it to someone as a secondary duty? Do they view it as an opportunity to gain valuable administrative experience? This individual is often in charge of making or coordinating decisions about these vital resources on our campuses. Yet it is rare, in Division III, that we provide the proper training and resources to the ones we ask to lead these discussions.

At the 2018 Convention, the NCAA concluded a two-year long working group on Gameday the DIII Way. The working group, which I served on, was determined to make a difference with our gameday atmosphere and to challenge our events to be unique. DIII events should stand apart from our colleagues in Division I or II as well as youth sports. It had been identified at an earlier Convention that there was a need to create this different experience for our families, friends and fans. Who at your institution is tasked with making this difference? Whether your school has gone through the gameday training or not, it is important to understand this role on your campus.

Each institution's door is unique, but there are professional associations for all of us to continue our education. NADIIIAA and CEFMA are two under the NACDA umbrella that offer professional development in these areas. Sign your staff up for webinars, regional conferences, membership to these organizations and most of all, participate

in conversation. We all get better by learning from one another and it is these communities of sharing that create growth. After all, your front door should not only be managed by someone who is eager to know and do more, but one that has the resources to grow.

@d3admins