

## NAIA-ADACORNER



**Phil Hess**

**Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**

*Assistant AD*

### Embry-Riddle adds unique bench shade structures to soccer facility

Faced with the challenge of adding protection to its soccer teams' benches and blend the solution into the architecture of the athletics complex, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Ariz.) came up with a unique solution. Instead of selecting an "off the shelf" answer, a soccer shade structure was designed and built, giving ERAU one of the most distinctive bench areas in collegiate soccer.

A challenge that the Embry-Riddle soccer teams face when they come back to campus for fall camp and the first couple of months

of their season is the Arizona weather. At that time of the year the sun angle is still high and temperatures are frequently warm. It is also the middle of the monsoon season in Arizona, which can bring heavy downpours and lightning. Until now, the teams had to sweat it out in the sun and move to the locker rooms during inclement weather.

While a traditional soccer bench covering would help with the rain, the lack of air circulation would make them unbearably hot in warm weather. The solution was to provide a roof over the benches that would provide the covering needed, but still allow for air to flow through the bench area. A cantilevered covering was chosen to provide runoff to the back of the structure and to also match sloped roofs on other campus structures. Finishing off the roof with a copper color allows the structure to blend in with the rest of the athletics facilities. A plus to having the raised roof is that the back and sides of the shades can be wrapped in wind screen material that can be branded to provide more of an ERAU home atmosphere.

Concrete slabs support the structures, which were poured with no damage to the field or track that surrounds it by pumping the concrete up a stairway that leads to the elevated field. The concrete also provides side and back walls to the benches. To keep the footprint small as opposed to having a long bench area, the concrete was poured to provide a two-level seating area with one bench sitting above and behind the other to provide a good view from either seating area. The metal/concrete structure also provides resistance to winds as opposed to other structures that can be blown around or tipped over by strong winds.

Finishing off the project a matching, but smaller, structure was placed between the two bench areas to provide a space that game officials and sports medicine can utilize. Construction time on the project was approximately six weeks. The end result was a set of structures that adds functionality and uniqueness for ERAU soccer that will last for years to come.

@NATYCAA2

## NATYCAACORNER



**Rob Chaney**

**Tallahassee Community College**

*Director of Athletics*

Intercollegiate athletics is often considered the front porch to a college or university and at the highest levels, a lot of the buzz can be attributed to facilities – from indoor waterfalls and miniature golf, to premium seating with an endless menu of amenities. Simply put, if you aren't "keeping up with the Joneses," you're falling behind. While it may be an exaggeration to say there is an "arms race" at the two-year level, more and more schools are finding different ways to make athletics facilities a priority.

At Tallahassee Community College (TCC), where we sit within two miles of both Florida State and Florida A&M, the pool of major donors and corporate sponsors is often slim. Therefore, collaborating with the TCC Foundation has proven to be a more successful strategy.

In 2016, with the help of the Foundation and an assist from their President's Circle members, our longtime partnership with neighboring Refreshment Services Pepsi & Vending yielded \$100,000 to take a vacant dance room, adjacent to our basketball court, and reimagine a new athletic training center, more than doubling the square footage of the previous facility. The result: better service to our student-athletes, which allows them to perform at the highest level.

Now, an even bigger opportunity with the Foundation is on the horizon – our first-ever capital campaign for athletics, with a major emphasis on facility enhancements.

Community partnerships have been another worthwhile investment for TCC. When the College made the decision to add fall sports to our lineup in 2015, cross country got the nod first, in large part, because of immediate access to world-class facilities in our backyard. The City of Tallahassee and Leon County have sunk tremendous resources into its trail system, headlined by the crown jewel, Apalachee Regional Park, a dedicated cross country course which has already been awarded the 2021 NCAA Championships. At no cost, the Eagles' runners utilize these facilities on a regular basis and have a "home course" that is second to none.

Tallahassee Community College isn't the only school to score high marks in the facilities game.

Previously, in this same column, you've read about renovations at Mt. San Antonio College's historic Hilmer Lodge Stadium. When you have a moment, I encourage you to check out the basketball arenas at Florida SouthWestern State College and Northwest Florida State College. Or the baseball stadiums at Jones (Miss.) College and Southern Union State (Ala.) Community College. Or soccer stadiums at Daytona State College and Eastern Florida State College. Or Iowa Western Community College's Athletic Performance Center. Just to name a few.

And let's not forget the emerging esports landscape, where arenas are popping up across the country, including at Northern Virginia Community College, where a vacated office suite turned out to be the perfect landing spot for the Nighthawks' newest team of student-athletes.

The foundation of two-year athletics hasn't changed – creating opportunities, inclusion, character, with an emphasis on academics and sportsmanship – but to quote Oregon State Director of Athletics Scott Barnes, the front porch is "not the most important room in the house, but it is the most visible." Regardless of how we get there, improved facilities encourage student engagement and enhance the student-athlete experience which, in turn, elevates the profile of our institution and increases student success rates exponentially.